

An Assessment of the Nature and Extent of Adoption of Strategic Planning Processes in the  
Public Sector: A Case Study of Zambia.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The adoption of strategic planning in the public sector has become common place. However, its adoption by the Zambian public sector has never been subjected to critical evaluation. The aim of this research was to investigate the nature and extent of adoption of strategic planning processes in the Zambian public sector.

This research used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and was based on a multiple case study approach. The qualitative research used semi-structure interviews and documentary review on thirteen government ministries with the resulting data being analysed using content analysis. The quantitative research used a self-completion questionnaire on sixteen government ministries.

The findings suggest an increase in the comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of strategic planning processes of the Zambian public sector. However, challenges were evident in a number of areas including; integration of organisational processes, harmonisation of strategic planning processes, completeness of the process, use of strategy tools and participation of operational staff and external stakeholders. Barriers established included; financial and human resource challenges, inadequate process alignment, inadequate enforcement mechanisms, inappropriate work culture, political interference, inadequate inter-ministerial coordination, inadequate communication of strategic plans and inadequate strategic planning knowledge among staff.

The findings of this research provide an important contribution by adding the Zambian perspective to the strategic management literature which, at the time of the study, had not been documented and subjected to critical review. A further important contribution is in the provision of a set of practical guidelines to assist public managers in optimising their use of strategic planning.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my mother, my late father, my wife, my daughter, my brothers and my sisters.

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First and foremost, I thank Jehovah God for his grace and strength throughout my studies. Truly, his grace is sufficient.

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To all these, I say thank you and may God bless you.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CSO	Civil Society Organisations
MDD	Management Development Division
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PSRP	Public Sector Reform Programme
RBV	Resource Based View
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAG	Sector Advisory Groups
SMM	Strategic Management Model
SNA	System of National Accounts
SP	Strategic Planning
SPP	Strategic Planning Process
UN	United Nations

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Strategic planning (SP) has been in use for many years now. It is a field that has attracted the interest of many practitioners and researchers and is seen to be useful in many ways (Song et al, 2015; Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2011; Poister, 2010; Ugboro, Obeng and Spann, 2010; Bryson, Crosby and Bryson, 2009; the Fifth National Development Plan, 2006; Hendrick, 2003). SP is a complex field with multiple approaches and characteristics (Murphy, 2011).

There is, however, still some debate regarding the usefulness of SP with its critics arguing that it is only helpful in benign environments (Song et al, 2015). This criticism is based on the perception that SP is rigid and inflexible and that it is detached from processes, methods and mechanism of implementation (Bryson, Crosby and Bryson, 2009). However, taking the view of SP as a flexible tool whose adoption and application should always take account of the organisation's context, it can be argued that SP is beneficial. This flexibility is achieved by adapting the characteristics of the strategic planning process (SPP) to the context of each organisation. Some of the characteristics of the SPP include; process comprehensiveness, stakeholder participation, formality and flexibility, use of strategy tools and Role and Structure of planning functions (Jimenez, 2013; Poister, 2010; Brown, 2010; Bryson, 2010; Poister et al 2010; Haug, 1997).

There is a significant volume of literature that has been written on this topic although no single agreed upon definition of SP exists. For purposes of this study, Bryson's (2011) definition was adopted. Bryson (2011:7) defined it as, "*a deliberative and disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organisation (or other entity) is, what it does and why it does it*".

SP has its roots in the private sector, but about four to five decades ago, spread to the public sector (Bryson and Roaring, 1988). SP is beneficial to organisations of all types, (Brockmann and Lacho, 2015) as such, many organisations both in the private and public sectors have adopted its use, the latter being the focus of this study. The forces that are reported as being behind the adoption of SP in the public sector include: (a) the increasing interdependence between the public and private sectors, (b) increasing globalisation, (c) the increasing interconnectedness between policy areas, (d) the increasing pressure for public accountability and better public service delivery , (e) the increasing levels of environmental

uncertainty, (f) pressure from co-operating partners and (g) its claimed success in the private sector (Bryson, 2011; 2010; Poister, 2010; Hendrick, 2003; Berry, 1994).

The presence of these forces place a demand on public organisations to adopt broad based, long range, proactive, inclusive and consultative approaches to management of which SP is one such approach. What is obvious is that pressure from these forces is expected to increase. It, therefore, goes to say that the importance of approaches such as SP in managing public sector organisations is expected to increase (Bryson, Berry and Yang, 2010; Bryson, 2010; Poister, 2010; Poister, Pitts and Hamilton, 2010).

However, the applicability of SP to the public sector is still subject to debate (Sulle, 2009). This is due to the existence of a very broad stakeholder base with varying vested interests, poor cultural values and attitudes, vagueness of policies and performance measures, short electoral cycles and political influence (Berry, 2007; Yusoff, 1998).

The public sector plays a very critical role in the management of any country. Its role includes; provision of public goods and services, formulation and implementation of government policies, maintaining law and order and provision of direction for the country. In so doing, the public sector is expected to provide an appropriate environment for social and economic development. Where the public sector fails to perform this role, its country will fail. From the foregoing, it can be concluded that “important” SP in the “important” public sector is an important topic that warrants critical evaluation and this is the reason for its selection for this research.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the topic of SP has attracted the interest of many public sector practitioners and researchers. However, it is evident from the literature that most of the research on SP is concentrated on developed countries in the western world (Elbenna, 2013; Suklev and Debarliev, 2012). There is limited literature on the nature and extent of use of SP in the public sector of developing countries. In the case of Zambia, the country on which this research was based, no such research seems to have been documented. Further, much of the literature the researcher could access was published prior to 2011, thus presenting an opportunity to update the literature with more recent empirical findings.

Zambia, as a developing country, faces a number of challenges and is in dire need of efficient and effective tools in order to manage her challenges. It also has experienced the above referred to SP driving forces. In this vein, the Zambian government adopted SP in 1993 as part of its Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The top leadership of the

country has made pronouncements which have demonstrated their commitment to the use of planning. For example, in his 2015 Official Opening of Parliament Address, the President, His Excellency Edgar Lungu, announced the creation of a Ministry for National Planning.

However, despite having adopted SP over 20 years ago and despite the importance government attaches to it, no empirical research has been published on the extent and nature of its use. This clearly presents a gap in the literature which this research addressed. The importance of SP for the public sector of a country such as Zambia and the absence of any documented critical review on this topic in Zambia has informed the choice of this research topic.

## **1.2. The Research Question, Aim and Objectives**

This research sought to find an answer to the following question:

“To what extent has the Zambian public sector adopted effective strategic planning?”

The aim of this research was to investigate the nature and extent of adoption of strategic planning processes (SPPs) in the Zambian public sector. The following objectives were addressed:

1. Based on twenty (20) ministries, to investigate the current strategic planning processes used by the Zambian public sector
2. To compare and evaluate the strategic planning processes within the Zambian public sector against strategic planning literature
3. To identify and investigate the major barriers to effective strategic planning experienced by the Zambian public sector
4. To develop a set of guidelines on the strategic planning process and recommendations on how the guidelines can be effectively implemented to assist effective strategic planning in the Zambian public sector.

## **1.3 Research Methodology**

To answer the above referred to research question, the research was based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (mixed methods) on a series of cross sectional case studies of all the government ministries.

The qualitative research used a combination of semi-structured interviews and documentary evidence. Resulting data was analysed using an excel worksheet through

which common themes were established. The quantitative research used a self-completion questionnaire and the resulting data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Both research methods were pilot tested prior to the main study.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Research**

The importance of SP and of the public sector have been established. Further, the need for SP for the Zambian public sector and the lack of critical review of the use of SP by the Zambian public sector has also been established. This research, therefore, updated the literature on SP by adding the Zambian perspective. Further, this research's significance lies in that it provided a set of practical guidelines and recommendations to help public managers in Zambia with ways to effectively implement SPPs in the face of its increasing importance. In particular, it provides important findings about the characteristics and challenges of the SPPs of the Zambia public sector.

Section 1.5 below provides an overview of how the remainder of this study is organised and what is contained in each chapter.

#### **1.5. Chapter Overview**

##### **Chapter 1 Introduction**

The introduction chapter provides an overview of the research including details of the research question, aim and objectives and the research methods used to answer the research question. Further, it provides an overview of the justification for the research.

##### **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

The literature review chapter highlights the researcher's awareness and understanding of the existing literature on SPPs. A contextual overview of Zambia is provided followed by a detailed critical review of SP general literature and concluded by a critical review of literature on public sector SP. A number of aspects have been covered including SP approaches, SP characteristics and barriers facing its use. The literature review provided a basis for the research.

##### **Chapter 3 Literature Synthesis**

This chapter draws central themes by tying together the various threads of the three literature review sections. Based on these themes, the research instruments were developed as overviewed below.

## Chapter 4      Research Methodology

The research methodology chapter provides details of the research paradigm and strategy. As stated in section 1.3, a mixed methods approach on a series of cross sectional case studies of ministries in Zambia was adopted based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

The qualitative research used a combination of semi-structured interviews and documentary review and targeted one respondent per ministry. A response rate of 65 % was achieved. Resulting data was analysed using an excel spreadsheet through which common themes were established.

The quantitative research used a self-completion questionnaire targeting 6 respondents per ministry. A response rate of 58% was achieved. The resulting data was analysed using the SPSS software. Both research methods were pilot tested prior to their application to the main study.

## Chapter 5      Pilot Study

This chapter provides details and results of the pilot study. Lessons learnt and amendments to the research methodology are also detailed.

## Chapter 6      Findings

This chapter provides details of the findings of the research in terms of the nature and extent of adoption of SPPs by the Zambian public sector. Details of the gaps and barriers to effective SP are also contained in this chapter.

## Chapter 7      Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter provides the researcher's conclusions resulting from the research findings contained in chapter 6. It also provides guidelines and recommendations for the Zambian public sector on how best it can optimise the use of SP.

In the next chapter, a critical review of the available literature on the Zambian public sector and on SPPs is provided.

## **CHAPTER 2                    LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1        Introduction**

The aim of this research was to investigate the nature and extent to which the Zambian public sector has adopted SPPs. To effectively carry out this investigation, a detailed understanding of the existing knowledge base on SP in general and in the public sector was developed and is provided in this chapter. The review establishes the importance and complexity of SP and a gap in the literature pertaining to its use by the Zambian public sector, thus informing the research.

The literature review is divided into three primary sections namely: the Zambian context, SP theory and SPPs in the public sector. However, before looking at these issues, a brief country overview of Zambia is presented to set the research in context.

### **2.2        The Zambian context**

#### **2.2.1    Overview**

This section provides an overview of Zambia and of the use of SPPs in the Zambian public sector. By so doing, it sets the research in context. In particular, the following aspects are reviewed: land and demographics, economic affairs, living conditions, international community relations, politics and administration, the Zambian public sector and the use of SPPs by the Zambian public sector.

#### **2.2.2    The Land and Demographics**

Zambia is a land linked Sub-Saharan African country sitting on a 752,612 square kilometers area. She shares her boundaries with Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Angola, Malawi, Tanzania, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

As of the 2010 National Census, Zambia had a population of 13 million people. This grew from 5.6 million in 1980 to 7.3 million in 1990 and 9.8 million in 2000. This translates to average annual population growth rates of 2.7% for the period from 1980 to 1990, 2.4% from 1990 to 2000 and 2.8% from 2000 to 2010. This also means that Zambia's population size has increased by over 130% in the period from 1980 to 2014. The current population (2014) is estimated at 15 million persons. In terms of urbanisation, statistics show an increase in the proportion of people living in urban areas, i.e. 39.51% in 2010, 34.67% in 2000, 39.35% in 1990 and 39.89% in 1980. Projections are at 41.51% for 2014

This increase in population and urbanisation implies an increase in demand for public services. SP provides an efficient means of meeting this increased demand for public services.

### **2.2.3 Zambia's Economic Affairs**

#### **2.2.3.1 Economic Background**

The performance of the Zambian economy has varied significantly since her independence in 1964. The following sections provide a brief discussion of Zambia's economic background. The discussion breaks the background into the pre- Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the post-SAP periods.

##### **Pre-Structural Adjustment Programme Period (1964 to 1985)**

During this period, Zambia operated a regularised command economy in which the government had control over economic activity through nationalisation of industry, price control **policies**, restriction of external competition and exchange rate control (Saasa, 1996). In the early years of this period, Zambia enjoyed good economic performance although this was short lived. A significant decline occurred during the period to 1985 with GDP growth rate falling to -3% in 1979 and inflation rising to over 100% in 1989 (Central Statistics Office, 2014).

The decline was due to both external and internal policy and management issues. External issues included the fall in the price of copper and the rise in prices of petroleum products. With Zambia's high dependency on copper, the fall in its price had a significant effect on her economic performance. Internal policy and management issues included the use of a regularised command economy and the existence of a large inefficient civil service. These issues worked against the creation of an appropriate environment for social and economic growth.

The poor performance of the economy necessitated government's implementation of the SAP (Saasa, 1996).

##### **Post-Structural Adjustment Programme Period (Post 1985)**

With the help of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), Government commenced the implementation of the SAP in 1985 although it was later abandoned in 1986 and then reintroduced in 1989 (Saasa, 1996).



The SAP aimed at stabilising the economy and creating an ideal environment for economic growth. Following the implementation of the SAP, significant economic improvements have been recorded with inflation reducing to a single digit and GDP recording positive growth.

The SAP involved improving public service management and creating a liberalised free market economy by reducing government control over industry, eliminating price control, encouraging external competition and diversifying the economy from copper. These measures implied a significant change in the role of the public sector in Zambia's economy. This includes the need for the public sector to adopt more strategic and proactive management approaches such as SP.

Implementation of the SAP is on-going (Manenga and Mudenda, 2010), with a number of reforms being implemented by the government in an effort to enhance social and economic development and improve public service delivery.

#### **2.2.3.2 Current Economic Trends**

Zambia is classified by the World Bank as a middle income developing country. A review of key economic performance indicators shows that Zambia has been recording stable positive economic growth although 2015 presented an unstable picture. GDP growth rate has been consistently positive and higher than the population growth rate since 1995. In 2014, it was at 6% while 2015 projections were at 7%. Inflation has also significantly dropped from levels of 113% in 1990 to 7.78% in 2014. However, in 2015 inflation rose to 21.1%. A trade surplus has also been recorded over the years although 2015 recorded a deficit. However, Zambia's continued dependence on copper as a major source of export revenue raises questions as to the sustainability of her economic growth. The current fall in the price of and demand for copper has already placed significant pressure on Zambia's economy as can be seen from the 2015 indicators. In this vein, the Minister of Finance in his 2014 year end national address stated that:

*“... It is the intention of the Government to continue with policies and strategies that will further consolidate the diversification of the economy and in the process ensure resilience to any adverse external developments, such as those associated with volatile copper prices”.* ([www.mofnp.gov.zm](http://www.mofnp.gov.zm))

The rate at which this positive growth is being translated into improved living conditions of the citizenry has, however, been a source of concern (Civil Society for Poverty

Reduction, 2010b). The next section provides an overview of the living conditions in Zambia.

#### **2.2.4 Living Conditions in Zambia**

The Zambian Government has made some progress in improving the living standards of its people (United Nations Development Programme Zambia, 2008). Despite this progress, there have been concerns regarding the rate at which Zambia's macroeconomic stability and economic growth is being converted into improved living conditions for the people (Civil Society for Poverty Reduction, 2010b). With the percentage of people living in extreme poverty at 51% (Central Statistics Office 2006), low life expectancy of 53 years in 2014, infant mortality rate of 45 and maternal mortality of 398 (Central Statistics Office, 2014), Zambia has been said to be among the poorest countries in Africa (Pereira, 2009). In their overview of Zambia, the World Food Programme (WFP) stated that:

*“Despite improved economic performance, issues such as income inequality and poor access to services have not been addressed as expected. Numerous challenges burden the country, including high rates of malnutrition, poverty, food insecurity....”* (<https://www.wfp.org/countries/zambia>)

Zambia was also classified among low human development countries by the 2013 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report.

Another challenge facing Zambia is that of inequitable distribution of national resources as seen from the huge gap between poverty levels in rural areas which according to the 2006 Living Conditions Monitoring and Survey Report stood at 64% and that in urban areas at 20%. The July to December 2010 barometer report stated that:

*“Only 20% of Zambia's population is enjoying 80% of Zambia's wealth”. p25.*

Zambia's situation is exacerbated by the low levels of decent jobs. Some of the other major challenges include low levels of access to quality health services, education and water and sanitation services.

The presence of these challenges highlights Zambia's need for effective management tools, SP being one such tool. Among the benefits of SP, if implemented effectively, is the enhancement of appropriate resource allocation and improved service delivery.

It would be interesting to assess the extent to which the use of SP in the Zambian public sector has been helpful in addressing the challenges of inequitable resource allocation and

poverty reduction. However, prior to carrying out such an assessment, understanding the extent and nature of its adoption should be a useful starting point (Green, 1998).

#### **2.2.5 Zambia and the International Community**

Zambia is a member of a number of international organisations. For example, she is a member of Southern African Development Community (SADC), Organisations for African Unity (OAU), and the United Nations (UN). Zambia's membership to these organisations has the effect of reducing her boundaries with the international community. Agreements in these organisations and happenings in other member countries have an impact on decisions and policies in Zambia. Further, like any other country, Zambia is not insulated from the effects of globalization as can be seen from the effects of the 2008 global economic crisis. Zambia's situation is further complicated by her location as a land linked country.

The foregoing entails that Zambia faces an increasingly complex environment (Emongor and Kirsten, 2009). This complexity entails the need for comprehensive management processes, such as SP, that can enable the public sector to exhaustively and proactively take account of all relevant factors, including provisions in international membership agreements and events in other member countries, in making policies and strategic decisions.

#### **2.2.6 Zambia's Politics and Administration**

Zambia is a democratic country with a five-year electoral cycle and has enjoyed peace since independence in 1964. Zambia has gone through three political systems starting with a multi-party system, moving to a one party state system and later back to a multi-party system.

Democratic governance demands the use of inclusive and participative systems where citizens have a major say in governance activities (Michels, 2011). In Zambia, efforts to promote stakeholder participation have been seen in initiatives such as the creation of Sector Advisory Groups (SAG), decentralisation of governance to local government and engagement of Civil Society Groups (CSO). In the 2011 to 2015 United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the republic of Zambia, the Minister of Finance reaffirmed the government's recognition of the need for increased stakeholder participation in planning and implementation of development programmes.

However, actual engagement seems to be a challenge (Civil Society for Poverty Reduction, 2012a; 2010b; Pereira, 2009). In many cases, engagement of the public has only been

limited to policy formulation stages with very limited participation in implementation, monitoring and review. It is argued that the extent of participation has been limited by the lack of capacity among citizens and the absence of enabling laws (Pereira, 2009). Cooperating partners like the UN have been providing support in enhancing the capacity of citizens and CSOs to engage in government programmes and in creating enabling laws by supporting the development of the new constitution (Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Governance Programme, 2011-2015; Pereira, 2009)

Administratively, Zambia is divided into ten (10) provinces and 90 districts (Central Statistics Office, 2014). Constitutionally, she is run by three organs of government namely: the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary (Constitution of Zambia, 1996). In line with the System of National Accounts (SNA)'s definition of public sector, the Zambian public sector is made up of central government, local government and other departments controlled by the state. The Executive comprises twenty (20) ministries. Each ministry is headed by a Cabinet Minister, Deputy Minister and a Permanent Secretary, all appointed by the President.

An effective and efficient public sector is essential in addressing the challenges discussed above. As such, the next few sections provide an overview of the public sector in Zambia.

#### **2.2.7 The Zambian Public Sector**

As stated above, the Zambian public sector comprises central government, local government and other departments controlled by the state. The basis of origin, mandate and functions of the Zambian public sector are contained in the Zambian constitution.

Some of the functions of the Zambian public sector include: the provision of public goods and service such as schools, the raising of government revenue, the allocation of public resources, the formulation and implementation of policies, the regulation of the private sector and the creation and provision of employment. In terms of employment, the 2012 labour force survey shows that public sector employment accounted for about 38% of the population employed in the formal sector. The Zambian public sector also creates employment by encouraging private sector investment.

By carrying out the above discussed functions and many others, the Zambian public sector plays a very important role in creating an appropriate environment for social and economic development. However, like public sectors in many other countries, the Zambian public

sector carries out its roles in the face increasingly complex and unstable environments. It is argued that the complexity and instability in public sector environments has resulted from factors such as: rises in natural and unnatural disasters such as earthquakes, droughts and terrorism, rapid technological developments, increasing globalisation, the increasing interconnectedness between policy areas, increasing sector interdependency and the increasing pressure for public accountability and better service delivery by citizens, elected officials and the media (Bryson, 2011; Bryson, 2010; Poister, 2010, 2005; Hendrick, 2003; Berry, 1994).

The preceding discussion on the Zambian context has shown that most of these factors are present in Zambia. It is in view of these challenges that various public sector reforms such as SP have been implemented.

#### **2.2.8 The Zambian Public Sector and Strategic Planning**

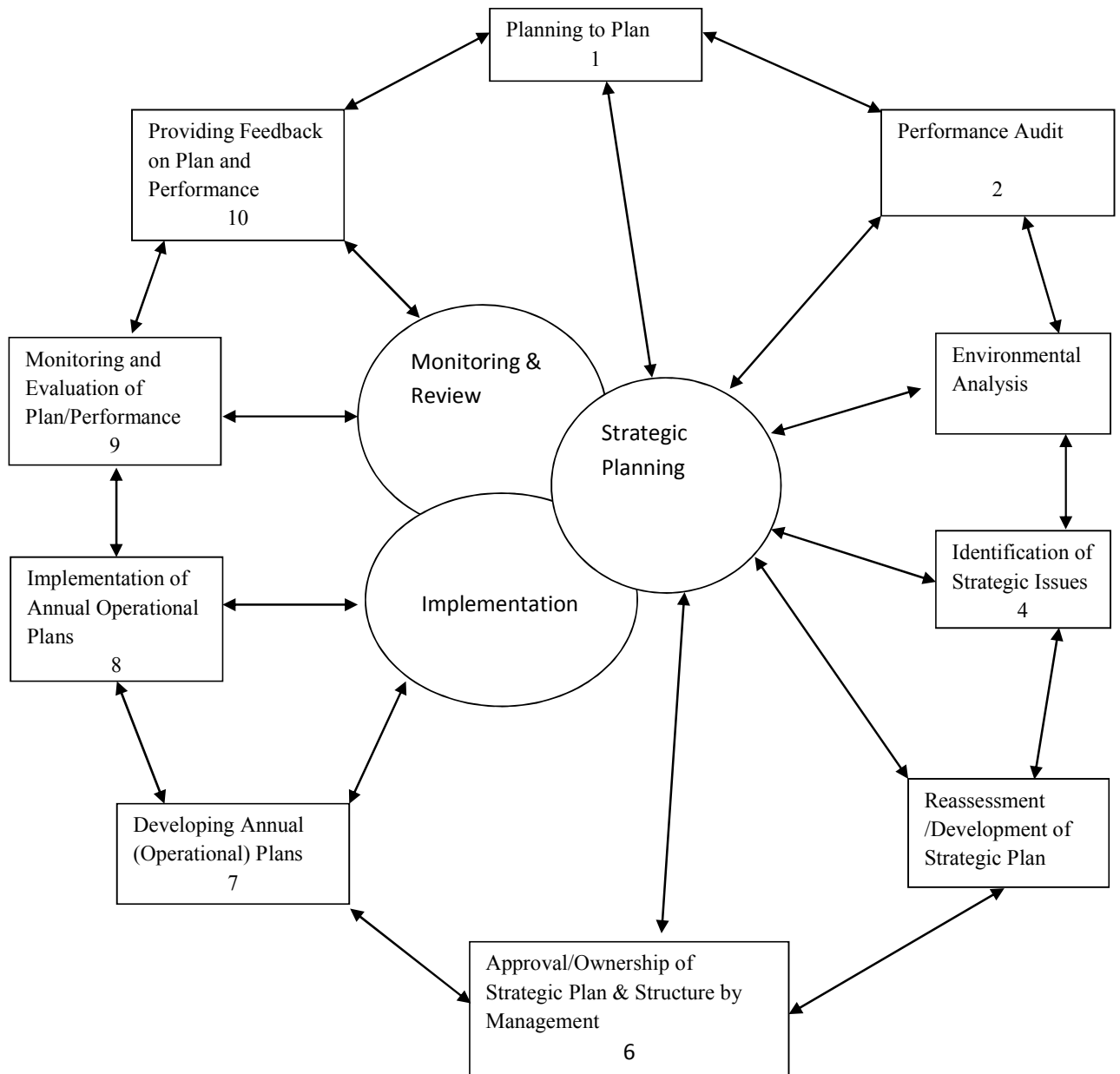
As was indicated in Section 2.2.3, the SAP implemented in 1989 involved an on-going series of reform programmes. One such reform is the Public Sector Reform Programme (PSRP) which was implemented in 1993. The overall aim of the PSRP was to improve the quality, efficiency and cost effectiveness of the public service (Management Development Division, 2001). One of the components of the PSRP is SP. The top leadership has continued to show its commitment to planning. For example, in his 2015 Official Opening of Parliament Address, the President, Mr. Edgar Lungu announced the creation of a Ministry of Planning.

The implementation of the PSRP in Zambia is the responsibility of the Management Development Division (MDD) which falls under the Office of the Secretary to Cabinet. The enforcement of this reform is done through a cabinet circular which requires all government ministries to develop SPs.

A framework called the Strategic Management Model (SMM) has been provided by the MDD to guide the implementation of strategic management (SM). The SMM is divided into three main phases namely formulation, implementation and monitoring. It comprises ten (10) steps (see Figure 2.1). In line with the recommendations from much of the existing SPP literature, the SMM emphasises the need for comprehensiveness, inclusiveness, formality and flexibility in SP. Further, the model is meant to be a guiding framework to be applied with flexibility and not as a rigid set of steps to be followed religiously (Management Development Division, 2001)

However, no critical review has been undertaken to assess the nature and extent to which SP is actually practiced in the Zambian public sector. It is to this end that this study is important. By carrying out a critical review of the practice of SP in the Zambian public sector, this study will make a contribution to the literature. From a practice point of view, this critical review will help provide practical guidelines to enhance the quality of SP in the Zambian public sector.

**Figure 2.1 Strategic Management Model for the Zambian Public Sector**



Source: Management Development Division (2001)

### **2.2.9 Summary**

This section has provided detailed understanding of the Zambian context by reviewing the literature on the following: land and demographics, economic background and current economic **trends**, living conditions, membership to international bodies, politics and administrative system, the structure and importance of the Zambian public sector and SP attempts by the public sector.

Key themes arising from this section include:

- a) That Zambia has recorded stable economic growth which is highly dependent on copper exports and thus needs further diversification of sources of growth.
- b) That despite the recorded stable economic growth, Zambia faces challenges of poor living conditions, inequitable resource distribution and poor public services delivery.
- c) That the Zambian public sector faces a complex and unstable environment.
- d) That SP can be a beneficial tool in helping Zambia address its challenges and improve public service delivery.
- e) That in recognition of (d) above, the Zambian government adopted SP in 1993 and mandates all ministries through a cabinet circular to develop SPs based on the SMM framework.
- f) That the extent and nature of adoption of SPPs by the Zambian public sector has not been subjected to critical review.

The next section provides a critical review of the theory underpinning SPPs.

## **2.3 Strategic Planning Theory**

### **2.3.1 Overview**

This section provides a detailed critical review of the literature on SP theory in terms of its importance and multiplicity of approaches and characteristics and how these have evolved overtime. Further, it reviews the literature on the barriers to SP and serves to inform the current research.

### **2.3.2 Importance of Strategic Planning**

Organisations face many challenges in their effort to enhance performance. These challenges come from both external and internal forces. SP is useful in addressing these challenges and in improving organisational performance. The importance of SP in the

management of organisations has been documented by several authors (e.g. Grant, 2003) and is evident in its wide adoption for use in all types of organisations regardless of sector or size (Song et al, 2015; Wandjiva, 2011; Ghobadian, Abby, et al, 2008; Griggs, 2002; Green, 1998).

SP is concerned with establishing the long term direction of the whole organisation by deliberately developing an understanding of the environment and devising visions, missions, objectives and strategies (Schwenk and Shrader, 1993). It is a useful tool for: (a) providing both long term direction and guidance for medium and short term decisions, (b) enhancing coordination and communication, (c) setting priorities and focusing of resource allocation on key areas, (d) enhancing the appreciation of organisational goals among stakeholders resulting in them taking ownership of organisational programmes and (e) enhancing staff morale and commitment (Song et al, 2015; Paul and Jarzabkowski, 2011; Poister, 2010; Ugboro, Obeng and Spann, 2010; Bryson, Crosby and Bryson, 2009; Hendrick, 2003; Mintzberg, 1994). SP is also useful in creating contexts for decision making in that it demands the development of a thorough understanding of the environment within which the organisation operates as a precondition to the development of strategies. SP ultimately enhances organisational performance (Murphy, 2011; Rajagopalan, Rasheed and Data, 1993).

However, literature on the impact of SP on organisational performance lacks consensus (Song et al, 2015). For example, Priem, Rasheed and Kotulic (1995) found that SP has a positive effect on firm performance for organisations operating in unstable and complex environments and no effect for those operating in stable environments. Al-Shammari and Hussein (2007), Brews and Hunt (1999) and Miller and Cardinal (1994) found that SP positively affects performance. On the other hand, Fredrickson (1984) and Fredrickson and Iaquinto (1989) found that it has a positive effect on performance for organisations operating in stable environments and not for those in unstable environments. Ghobadian et al (2008) found no systematic relationship. Studies that have consolidated the literature on the effect of SP on organisational performance have found a net positive effect (e.g. Miller and Cardinal, 1994; Schwenk and Shrader, 1993).

These inconsistencies can be explained by a number of factors including: failure to control for other variables that affect performance (Schwenk and Shrader, 1993; Pearce, Freeman and Robinson, 1987), omitting to evaluate the quality of SPPs adopted prior to assessing its impact, sampling error, differences in definitions used to operationalise key constructs such



as SP and performance (Pearce, Freeman and Robinson, 1987), sampling bias (Kukalis, 1991) and other methodological differences (Miller and Cardinal, 1994).

The above discussed controversy seems to have had very little harm on the popularity of SP, especially in the recent past. SP has continued to increase in its popularity both in academia and practice (Ghobadian et al, 2008). For public sector organisations, significant resources are being applied to the development and implementation of SP both by governments and cooperating partners. There is, therefore, no controversy regarding its existence (Chaffee, 1985). However, to date there is no consensus on its definition, a matter which is addressed below.

### **2.3.3 Strategic Planning Definition**

A review of the literature shows numerous definitions of SP, each defining some of its aspects, without any universally agreed definition emerging (Murphy, 2011; Chaffee, 1985). The lack of consensus on its definition is perhaps due to its complexity which is necessitated by the complexity of the challenges it is meant to address. Complex situations require complex solutions. Examples of some of the definitions found in the literature are provided below:

*“Strategic planning is a systematic process for managing an organisation and its future direction in relation to its environment and in accordance with the demand from its stakeholders” (Berry, 2001:263) cited in Sulle (2009:4).*

*“Strategic planning is the process of determining the mission, major objectives, strategies, and policies that govern the acquisition and allocation of resources to achieve organisational aims” (Pearce, Freeman, and Robinson, 1987:658).*

*"Strategic planning is a deliberative, disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organisation (or other entity) is, what it does , and why it does it" (Bryson, 2011:7).*

For purposes of this study Bryson's (2011) definition was adopted. This is on account of it being less prescriptive and thus applicable to a wide range of situations. This study also uses the terms SP and strategic management interchangeably. This is because these concepts are very similar (Green, 1998).

Further to having multiple definitions, SP is characterised by multiple approaches. These are discussed next.

### 2.3.4 Strategic Planning Process Approaches

Various approaches on how to implement SP have been provided by different researchers, each claiming the suitability of their approach to particular circumstances. These approaches differ in terms of the emphasis each gives to selected characteristics of the SPP. The multiplicity of approaches is evidence of the complexity (Song et al, 2015) of SP. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the evolution of SPP approaches.

**Table 2.1 Overview of the Evolution of Strategic Planning Approaches**

<b>Key Dates</b>	<b>Approach</b>	<b>Key Thrust</b>	<b>Authors</b>
1950s	Rational Approach (Based on the design school)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliberate, systematic and conscious approach to strategy formulation</li> <li>• Comprehensiveness</li> <li>• Thinking before acting</li> <li>• Articulation of explicit strategies</li> <li>• Strategy determining structure</li> <li>• Top down approach</li> </ul>	Brews and Hunt (1999). Ansoff (1965, 1991),
1970s	Emergent Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency of strategy through trial and experience</li> <li>• Flexibility and learning</li> <li>• Integration of formulation and implementation</li> <li>• Implicit and unarticulated strategy</li> <li>• Bottom up strategy formulation</li> </ul>	Mintzberg (1988, 1987)
1980s	Logical Incrementalism Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy as a framework to guide future decisions made incrementally</li> <li>• Combination of both deliberateness (control/ direction) and emergency (flexibility/ learning)</li> </ul>	Quinn (1980)
1980s	Resource Based View Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and use of firm internal capabilities (resources) to develop and implement strategies</li> <li>• Organisational efficiency and effectiveness</li> <li>• Emphasis on the internal environment and competitors</li> </ul>	Barney (1991, 1986)
1990s	Dynamic Capabilities Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation ability to continually create, update and modify its resources to address rapidly changing environments</li> <li>• Emphasis on both internal and external environment</li> <li>• Deliberateness in developing capabilities</li> </ul>	Ambrosini, Véronique, and Bowman.(2009) )Teece et al (1990),
1990s	Competence Based Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human resources</li> <li>• Identification and exploitation of competencies that distinguish higher performers from average performers.</li> </ul>	Kochanski (2012) Augustine A Lado et al (1992)

On one extreme of the SPP approach continuum is the rational approach. The rational approach dates back to the 1950s and is based on the design school principles. Under this approach, SP is a formal, deliberate, conscious, comprehensive and systematic process

which involves systematic analysis of an organisation's environment, both internal and external, in the formulation of explicit and articulated strategies. This approach emphasises the need for comprehensive and systematic analysis and thinking prior to taking action (Murphy, 2011; Brews and Hunt, 1999; Ansoff, 1991; 1965). Hart (1992:328) states that;

*“The rational model of decision making applied to strategy suggests systematic environmental analysis, assessment of internal strengths and weaknesses, explicit goal setting, evaluation of alternative courses of action, and the development of a comprehensive plan to achieve the goals”*

The rational approach aims to achieve strategic fit between the organisation and its environment.

Criticisms against the rational approach evolve around concerns that its demand for formal and systematic processes renders it restrictively inflexible and that it detaches strategy formulation from implementation (Mintzberg, 1994, 1988; Mintzberg and waters, 1985; Quinn, 1980). The detachment of formulators from implementers may result in strategies that are detached from reality and in implementers not taking ownership of the resulting strategies consequently resulting in poor implementation.

On the other extreme is the emergent approach which posits that SP should not be a result of a deliberate process but rather a result of multiple trial and error steps. Proponents of this approach argue that it promotes organisational learning (Mintzberg, 1990; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). The emphasis of this approach is on flexibility and continuous learning. In acknowledging the unstructured, unstable and complex nature of organisational environments, proponents of this approach argue that SP should not be based on structured systematic approaches and that it is not necessary to make strategies explicit as this serves only to stifle flexibility. They advocate for the integration of roles of strategy formulation and implementation such that strategies are formulated by implementers (Mintzberg, 1987). This approach however overlooks the need for organisations to be provided with a sense of direction, control and coordination for various decisions and activities. The emergent approach leaves too much to chance, trial and error. By leaving strategy to emerge in small steps without any sense of direction provided, this approach may result in multiple steps being taken, each leading the organisation in a different direction resulting in the organisation going round circles (Ansoff, 1991).

The rational and emergent approaches are two extremes of the SPP continuum. As seen from the preceding discussion, each has its own strengths and limitations. The complexity of organisational management in reality entails that no single approach fits all situations. It can, therefore, be argued that in practice, organisations should adopt SP approaches that fall somewhere in between the two extremes (Brews and Hunt 1999; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). Approaches that take account of the need for systematic analysis, direction, control and coordination but yet still retain adequate flexibility.

Somewhere between the two extremes are approaches which combine components of the rational and emergent approaches. One such approach is the logical incrementalism or planned emergence (Grant, 2003; Quinn, 1980). Under this approach, strategies are formed as frameworks to guide and provide consistency for future decisions made incrementally. The formulation of strategies as guiding frameworks is in line with Ansoff (1991:457)'s view that;

*“Strategy concept used in practice does not specify alternatives. On the contrary, it sets guidelines for the kinds of opportunities the firm wants to develop through search and creativity.”*

This approach seeks to address both the need for a sense of direction, control and coordination and that for flexibility. In so doing, it allows for both deliberateness and emergency in strategy formulation.

The resource based view approach (RBV) is a more recent approach which dates back to the 1980s. It is based on the view that organisational resources can be used to conceive and implement strategies that can generate competitive advantage through improved efficiency and effectiveness (Barney, 1991). Proponents of this view argue that earlier approaches to strategy were focused more towards the external environment. The RBV approach is, however, criticized for focusing too much on the internal environment and slicing the external environment. Critics of this approach argue that organisational resources should be analysed taking in account the complexity (number of factors) and instability (also referred to as dynamism) of the environment. To address this concern, the dynamic capabilities approach was developed in the early 1990s (Teece et al, 1990). The focus of the dynamic capabilities approaches is on the ability of organisations to respond to the dynamism of their environments by being able to continually and dynamically create and update their resources. Another addition to the RBV perspective is the competency based approach whose focus is on developing strategies based on the identification and

exploitation of competencies that distinguish higher performers from average performers (Kochanski, 1997).

The above review of the approaches to SP attest to how much this field has evolved over the years (Ansoff, 1991). Another dimension of the complexity of SP is in the multiplicity of its characteristics, a matter which is the subject of the next section.

### **2.3.5 Characteristics of the Strategic Planning Process**

The preceding section has established the multiplicity of SPP approaches and that there is no one single best approach. The SPP also has multiple characteristics. Table 2.2 provides a summary of SPP characteristics.

The number of characteristics contained in Table 2.2 **attests** to the complexity of the SPP. The manner and extent to which these characteristics are applied in different organisations will differ depending on each organisation's context (Murphy, 2011; Haug, 1997; Kukalis, 1991).

For example, the SPP characteristics applied by an organisation operating in the private sector will be different from those applied by one operating in the public sector.

For purposes of this study, comprehensiveness, formality and flexibility, stakeholder participation, use of strategy tools and the role and structure of planning functions are analysed further.

#### **2.3.5.1 Comprehensiveness**

Fredrickson and Mitchell (1984:445) **defined comprehensiveness as a measure of rationality and as,**

*“The extent to which organisations attempt to be exhaustive and inclusive in making and integrating strategic decisions”.*

Existing research has measured comprehensiveness in terms of the extent of exhaustiveness and inclusiveness of environmental analysis, alternatives generation and evaluation, decision integration, the extent of completeness of the SPP and planning scope (Grant, 2003; Haug, 1997; Kukalis, 1991; Fredrickson, 1984). As can be seen from Table 2.2, several other authors have examined similar measures of comprehensiveness though using different terminology. The high volume of literature on comprehensiveness testifies to the

**Table 2.2 Summary of Strategic Planning Process Characteristics by Author**

<b>SPP Characteristics</b>	<b>Author</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensiveness</li> </ul>	Fredrickson and Mitchell (1984)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The adaptive aspect</li> <li>• The integrative aspect</li> <li>• Formality</li> <li>• Internal complexity</li> <li>• External complexity</li> <li>• Specific MIS for planning</li> <li>• Accounting systems</li> <li>• Supplemental sources of information</li> </ul>	Ryne's (1987)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of information</li> <li>• Generation and evaluation of alternatives</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Integration</li> </ul>	Eisenhardt (1989)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning extensiveness</li> <li>• Role of corporate planning staff</li> <li>• Planning horizon</li> <li>• Frequency of plan review</li> </ul>	Kukalis (1991)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensiveness</li> <li>• Rationality</li> <li>• Degree of political activity</li> <li>• Participation/involvement</li> <li>• Plan duration</li> <li>• Extent /type of conflict</li> </ul>	Rajagopalan et al.(1993)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning implementation</li> <li>• Market research competence</li> <li>• Key personnel involvement</li> <li>• Staff planning assistance</li> <li>• Innovativeness of strategies</li> </ul>	Veriyath and Shortell (1993)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process formality</li> <li>• Size of planning effort</li> <li>• Process sophistication</li> <li>• Top management team involvement</li> <li>• Middle management team involvement</li> <li>• Planning horizon</li> </ul>	Haug (1997)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure and role of corporate planning departments</li> <li>• Linkages between strategic planning and other decision making systems</li> <li>• Participation</li> <li>• Role of strategic planning in overall management</li> </ul>	Grant (2003)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensiveness</li> <li>• Flow and participation</li> <li>• Strategic planning process tools</li> <li>• Strategic plan duration</li> </ul>	Murphy (2011)

importance attached to this characteristic and thus being the reason for its adoption for this study.

Comprehensive SPPs are more a feature of the rational approach than of the emergent approach. Therefore, organisations that base their SPP on the rational approach are more likely to be more comprehensive.

Comprehensiveness is influenced by a number of factors. An organisation's environment will impact on comprehensiveness although the direction of its impact is still a subject of debate. Fredrickson and Mitchell (1984) found that comprehensiveness was associated with poor performance in unstable environments. This finding was based on the view that comprehensiveness lacks flexibility and decision speed, factors which are critical for success in unstable environments. The generalisability of the findings of this study is questionable as it was based on a single industry.

On the contrary, Kukalis (1991), Eisehardt (1989) and Priem, Rasheed and Kotulic (1989) found that in high performing organisations, increases in environmental dynamism were associated with increased planning comprehensiveness. This positive relationship could be due to the fact that increases in environmental dynamism imply increases in the number of variables that need to be considered hence the need to be more comprehensive. In practice, organisation should seek to achieve a balance between the need for comprehensiveness and that for speed in decision making (Kukalis 1991).

Organisational factors also influence comprehensiveness (Haug, 1997; Fredrickson, 1984). Larger complex organisations deal with more variables and activities thus require more coordination and integration. Large organisations are also more likely to have the necessary resources to implement such processes. Consequently, such organisations are expected to be more comprehensive than smaller ones with simple structures (Haug, 1997).

However, evidence on the effect of organisational factors on comprehensiveness is inconsistent. For example, Griggs (2002) found that although smaller organisations that used more comprehensive SPPs had better results, the majority of smaller organisations used less comprehensive processes. The findings of this study would, however, have been strengthened had the researcher included larger organisations in his sample to assess if the findings were also applicable to such organisations. On the contrary, Kukalis' (1991) found that organisational size did not have a significant effect on planning extensiveness but that organisational structure did. This study has the advantage of having been based on a multi-

industry sample, although it did not cover the public sector which is the focus of the current study. Its findings therefore may not be applicable to this sector. A further limitation of this study is its having only considered large organisations.

Further, organisations that have longer planning experience and more skilled and experienced personnel are likely to use more comprehensive planning processes (Brews and Hunt 1993). This expectation is consistent with the learning curve effect concept.

Comprehensiveness, however, has the disadvantage of being costly in terms of money and time. For example, to be exhaustive in assessing the environment and in generating and evaluating alternatives requires money and a lot of time (Fredrickson and Mitchell, 1984; Fredrickson, 1984). An organisation should have a good information management system and the necessary skills to generate and evaluate alternatives.

#### **2.3.5.2 Formality and Flexibility**

Formality relates to the degree to which the SPP is systematic, deliberate and orderly. It is a feature of the rational approach. Grant (2003) measured formality using the number of documents used, use of standardized planning cycles and use of formal presentations. Kukalis (1991) used planning horizon and frequency of plan reviews while Haug (1997) used the number of planning documents used, the number of areas for which written plans exist and the number of such plans which are reviewed on a regular basis. Other measures which have been used include the existence of written plans (O'Regan and Ghobadian, 2002) and the existence of documented planning procedures (Haug, 1997).

Proponents of planning formality argue that it brings order and coordination and helps in ensuring that all necessary aspects are taken into account (Ansoff, 1991). Critics, however, posit that formality is costly (Ghobadian, 2008) and that it stifles flexibility thereby reducing the organisation's responsiveness to environmental changes (Mintzberg, 1988). Brews and Hunt (1999) argue that there is nothing that stops planning from being both formal and flexible and that the two coexist in practice. This position is in line with Grant (2003)'s proposition that in practice SP should fall in between the two **extremes** of rational and emergent approaches.

Formality is influenced by environmental, organisational and decision specific factors (Rajagopalan et al, 1993). Kukalis (1991) found an inverse relationship between environmental complexity and formality. Grant (2003) confirmed this in his findings that increased environmental turbulence resulted in a reduction in formality. In contrast,



Ghobadian et al (2008) found that environmental factors did not have any effect on formality.

In terms of the influence of organisational factors, Ghobadian et al (2008) found that organisation size has a positive effect on formality. On the contrary, Haug (1997:736) failed to find evidence to support the hypothesis that, *“process formality will be higher for organisations with complex organisational forms”*. Considering that complex and larger organisations like those in the public sector require more coordination and that formality is useful in enhancing coordination, it is reasonable to expect that such organisations will have more formal SPPs (Haug, 1997).

### **2.3.5.3 Role and Structure of Planning Functions**

The role and structure of planning functions has evolved over time (Grant, 2003; Ansoff, 1991). The evolution has been necessitated by the need to implement lessons that have been learnt overtime and to better align SPPs to prevailing environmental conditions. Under the original design school principles, planning functions were staffed with specialists and they played a dominant role of actually preparing SPs. They prepared SPs with top management and left implementation of those plans with line managers. The resulting plans were at times not implementable as they lacked the touch of the first hand experiences of line managers who, as a result, did not take ownership of them. Mintzberg (1994:110) called this, *“the fallacy of detachment”*.

The role of planning functions has shifted from that of preparing SPs to that of providing information and coordinating planning activities. Grant (2003) found that the roles of planning functions included providing technical and administrative support, preparing economic, political and market forecast, carrying out risk analysis, competitor analysis and other investigations, fostering communication and providing internal consultancy. Plans are formulated by line management while planners simply coordinate, analyse and consolidate them.

In terms of the structure and staffing of planning functions, Grant (2003) found that planning functions were headed by senior staff and that planning staff were drawn from line management on a 3 to 5 year rotational basis. The senior staff heading planning functions played the role of sponsor and helped in demonstrating the importance senior management attached to SP. The drawing of line management staff to serve in planning functions helped to blend skills of planners and the experience of line management staff.

However, the use of a single industry in this study limits the applicability of these findings to other settings such as the public sector.

The role and structure of planning functions is influenced by environmental and organisational factors. Increased environment instability and complexity increases the need for speed in information and alternatives generation and evaluation and necessitates a reduction in the formulation- implementation gap. Under such conditions, formulation and implementation tends to occur almost simultaneously (Mintzberg, 1987) and the need for continuous monitoring of the environment is increased. This implies that the importance of the role of planning functions in actively and continuously reviewing and monitoring the environment, the suitability of the existing plans (Raes et al 2011) and the organisation's progress in implementing them also increases (Grant, 2003). The need to make decisions fast does not substitute the need to make informed decisions. On the contrary, however, Kukalis (1991) found that environmental complexity is negatively correlated with the role of planning staff.

In larger organisations, planning functions play a critical role in coordinating the various planning activities and in providing information on the many variables at play. Larger organisations are also likely to have the necessary resources to run planning departments. This is in line with Kukalis' (1991) findings that both organisational size and structure have a positive influence on the role of planning functions.

#### **2.3.5.4 Stakeholder participation**

Stakeholder participation is another important characteristic of the SPP as is demonstrated by the high volume of research that has been conducted on it (e.g. Murphy, 2011; Grant, 2003; Griggs, 2002; Haug, 1997; Rajagopalan et al, 1993; Veliyath and Shortell, 1993). Stakeholder participation is a measure of inclusiveness of an organisation's SPP. It looks at who is involved in SP and at the extent to which they are involved.

Bryson & Roering (1987:11) defined stakeholders as, *“any individual, group, or other organisation that can place a claim on the organisation's attention, resources, or output or is affected by that output”*. Stakeholders can be categorised as either internal or external. Internal stakeholders include employees while external stakeholders include those who are not employees. A review of the literature shows that the majority of studies on stakeholder participation relates to the engagement of internal stakeholders. This presents a significant gap in the literature on the role played by external stakeholders (Gauthier et al, 2010). The

role and extent of engagement of external stakeholder is very important, especially in public sector organisation. This is so because public organisations are accountable to a wider range of stakeholders. The importance of external stakeholders to public sector organisations is discussed in more detail in Section 2.4.3.4.

Researchers have examined the extent to which various stakeholder groups are engaged in SP. Griggs (2002) and Veliyath and Shortell (1993) examined the extent of involvement of key personnel. Grant (2003) examined the extent of involvement of individuals in SP although it appears no clear criteria on who these individuals were was provided in the article. Raes et al (2011), Wai-Kwong et al (2001) and Haug (1997) studied the extent of participation of top and middle management.

Wider stakeholder participation enables organisations to take account of the views of stakeholders and increases the extent to which stakeholders take ownership of SPs. This reduces resistance and increases the chances of successful implementation (Veliyath and Shortell, 1993). Stakeholder participation is, therefore, expected to result in improved performance (Griggs, 2002; Veliyath and Shortell, 1993). Raes et al (2011) argued that positive interaction between top management teams and middle managers results in improved strategic decision and implementation quality which in turn improves performance. These findings are in line with Wai-Kwong et al's (2001) findings that involvement of human resources managers and other middle level managers was positively related to perceived organisational performance though this study was only applied on organisations operating a cost leadership strategy. This, perhaps, is the reason for the increased engagement of key stakeholders in SP. For example, Grant (2003) found a shift from a top down approach to a bottom up approach which transferred responsibility for SP to business unit managers.

It is, however, worth noting that wider stakeholder participation could be costly in terms of staff time and financial costs. Further, wider stakeholder participation could result in unproductive winding debates and higher levels of conflict without achieving consensus. This could, in turn, result in too much time being spent on planning, a luxury which organisation, especially those operating in dynamic environments, may not afford. On the positive side, however, wider participation can help in the early identification and resolving of potential conflicts (Gauthier et al, 2010). This should be more advantageous than waiting to address the conflicts at the implementation stage. Ultimately, the challenge is

in achieving a balance which ensures that the benefits arising from stakeholder participation outweighs its cost.

Stakeholder participation is influenced by various contingent factors. Haug (1997) found that high levels of environmental complexity resulted in higher levels of involvement of top management but failed to find support for their hypothesis that such environments would also be associated with high involvement of middle management teams. Regarding the effect of organisational complexity, they failed to find support for their hypothesis that organisational complexity would result in less involvement of top management teams but more of middle management. Overall, these results imply limited participation of middle management teams in complex environments and organisations. This is contradicted by the results found by Grant (2003) who found that increased environmental turbulence was associated with increases in bottom up SP. This contradiction could have resulted from the fact that these studies were based on different samples and used different conceptualizations of environment factors and stakeholder participation.

Organisation size influences the extent of stakeholder participation. Considering that larger complex organisations will have a lot of activities being undertaken through more people and that the activities of such organisations will affect more people, it is expected that larger organisation need to engage more stakeholders in their SPPs than smaller simpler ones (Raes et al, 2011). In line with this, Griggs (2002) found a positive relationship between organisation size and extent of stakeholder participation. Another organisational factor that could affect stakeholder participation is the length of time over which the stakeholders involved have worked together. The longer they have worked together, the higher the chances they will have gained enough trust for each other and the higher the level of trust, the higher the level of engagement is likely to be (Raes et al, 2011).

#### **2.3.5.5 Use of Strategy Tools**

A number of researchers have in the recent past demonstrated their interest in the extent of use and the usefulness of strategy tools in practice (e.g. Wright, Sotirios and Daniela, 2013; Jarratt and Stiles, 2010; Gunn and Williams, 2007).

Gun and Williams (2007:202) described strategy tools as concepts, analytical frameworks, techniques and methodologies that assist managers in making decisions. There is a large arsenal of strategy tools. The use of some of these tools in practice has been reviewed although with a bias towards the private sector. For example, Gun and Williams (2007)

examined the use of balanced scorecard, benchmarking, competitor analysis, core competences analysis, identification of critical success factors, industry 5-forces analysis, lifecycle analysis, McKinsey 7 'S', organisational cultural analysis, resource capability analysis, scenario planning, stakeholder analysis, stakeholder mapping, SWOT analysis and value chain analysis.

Strategy tools provide systematic structures for gathering and analysing information, generating, analysing and evaluating strategic options, making strategic choices and for measuring performance (Wright, Sotirios and Daniela, 2013; Jarratt and Stiles, 2010; Gun and Williams, 2007). By doing this, strategy tools aid and guide managers in making strategic decisions.

Considering the increase in environmental complexity and sophistication which is resulting from the increasing interconnectedness between various environmental factors, the high rate of technological innovations, increasing globalisation, regulatory reforms and the advent of increasingly demanding consumers (Suklev and Debarliev, 2014; Jacobides, 2010), it is reasonable to expect the importance of strategy tools to also increase. In line with this, Wright, Sotirios and Daniela's (2013) study found that managers operating in current environments do in fact look for tools which provide multiple perspectives, which help them to come up with new ideas and to perform analysis from different angles, which show interconnectivities between entities, which divide areas to give a clearer picture, and which guide the thinking process in ways that foster complex and connected thinking. This finding is in line with Jarratt and Stiles (2010) who found that practitioners use multiple tools to enable them examine interactions between various interrelated dimensions.

On the other hand, however, increasing environmental complexity raises questions on the suitability of traditional tools. Weick (2006) argued that the use of traditional tools such as SWOT results in fixation error, confused complexity and over-simplification and that they are therefore only ideal for stable non-complex environments. This argument is in line with Jacobides (2010)'s proposition that traditional strategy tools create static categories and are not suitable for rapidly changing environments. Other authors also argue that strategy tools stifle creativity (Crack, 1997) and are costly to apply (Rigby, 2001). To address these limitations, Weick (2006) proposes the use of intuition, experience and imagination. The use of such methods, however, presents a risk of omitting important issues as they do not provide a structured approach for considering strategic issues. Such omissions may be detrimental.

However, there are concerns that the use of strategy tools in practice is limited (Stonehouse and Pemberton, 2002 cited by Murphy, 2011). The limited application could be due to a number of factors including managers not finding traditional tools to be adequate in addressing the complexities facing their organisations (Murphy 2011) and/or the lack of understanding of how to use these tools (Wright, Sotirios and Daniela, 2013; Gunn and Williams, 2007). If the former is the reason, then researchers have the task of developing tools that will address the apparent complexities. If the latter is the reason, then practitioners have the task of developing adequate understanding of these tools.

Like other SPP characteristics, the use of strategy tools is influenced by a number of factors such as: environmental dynamism and complexity (Jarratt and Stiles, 2010), organisational size and educational background of decision makers (Gunn and Williams, 2007). This, in turn, entails that there is no single set of tools that fits all organisations. Organisations need to take account of their specific contexts when selecting tools to adopt.

Both Wright, Sotirios and Daniela (2013) and Gunn and Williams (2007) advocated for more research to be undertaken to examine the extent of use of strategy tools, examining what managers look for in these tools and how these tools are used in practice. Much of the documented research on the use of strategy tools is on the developed world context. This presents a great opportunity to update literature on this aspect with findings from the developing world perspective.

### **2.3.6 Barriers to Strategic Planning**

Suklev and Debarliev (2012:74) state that, *“between the ideal of strategic planning and the reality of implementation lie many difficulties”*, i.e. barriers to the effective implementation of SP. Barriers to SP relate to any factors that prevent its effective implementation.

Latif et al (2012) argued that barriers exist at every stage of the SPP. At the formulation stage, barriers will prevent the formulation of appropriate strategies while at the implementation and monitoring and review stages they will prevent successful execution, measurement of progress and provision of feedback.

Barriers that result in the formulation of inappropriate strategies may lead the organisation on a wrong course in turn making implementation difficult. Barriers to implementation invalidate even appropriate strategies. Both formulation and implementation are important

stages of the SPP although it is argued that implementation plays a much more important role (Kargar and Blumenthal, 1994). Despite the importance of implementation, organisations seem to focus more on formulation without paying due attention to addressing barriers to implementation (Yambwa, 2014; Casella, 2002).

Table 2.3 provides a summary of some of the barriers that various researchers have reviewed. These barriers are interrelated and re-enforce each other (Latif et al, 2012). What is surprising is that most of the barriers in Table 2.3 have been thorns for many years and are still appearing as barriers in recent research (e.g. Latif et al, 2012). This is despite many proposed suggestions on means to eliminate them. This leaves the question of whether these barriers can really be overcome begging an answer. In response to this question, Beer and Eisenstat (2000) argued that with the right management attitude and approach, it is possible to address these barriers.

Beer and Eisenstat (2000:36) in recommending measures to eliminate barriers argued that leaders should not avoid talking about them:

*“Leaders must engage in an honest conversation about the barriers and their underlying causes”.*

**Table 2.3 Summary of Strategic Planning Barriers**

<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Authors</b>
Inadequate staff capabilities	Latif et al. (2012), Suklev and Debarliev (2012), O'Regan and Ghobadian (2002), Beer and Eisenstat (2000), Kargar and Blumenthal (1994)
Inadequate resources	Recklies (2008)
Poor communication	Latif et al. (2012), Suklev and Debarliev (2012), O'Regan and Ghobadian (2002), Beer and Eisenstat (2000), Kargar and Blumenthal (1994)
Ineffective coordination of activities	Suklev and Debarliev (2012), O'Regan and Ghobadian (2002), Beer and Eisenstat (2000), Kargar and Blumenthal (1994)
Poor management and leadership	Latif et al. (2012), Recklies (2008), Beer and Eisenstat (2000), Kargar and Blumenthal (1994)
Unclear strategy and conflicting priorities	Recklies (2008), Beer and Eisenstat (2000), Kargar and Blumenthal (1994)
Crises that distracted attention away from implementation	O'Regan and Ghobadian (2002); Kargar and Blumenthal (1994)

Other proposed measures include: improving management and staff capabilities for both strategy formulation and implementation, enhancing the quality of communication within the SPP and of the resulting SPs, improving clarity of strategies and implementation tasks, improving coordination of implementation within and across functions and business units, enhancing participation of implementers in formulation and by enhancing accountability through the use of appropriate measures like regular reviews and linking of reward systems to desired performance (Latif et al, 2012; Recklies, 2008; Beer and Eisenstat, 2000).

### **2.3.7 Summary**

This section has provided a comprehensive review of the literature on SP theory as it relates to various industries. In particular, it has highlighted on the importance of SP, the approaches to SP, the characteristics of SPPs and the barriers to SP. Approaches reviewed include: the rational, the emergent, the logical incrementalism, the RBV, the dynamic capabilities and the distinctive competences approaches while SPP characteristics reviewed include: comprehensiveness, formality and flexibility, stakeholder participation, the role and structure of planning functions and the use of strategy tools.

The Zambian public sector appreciates the importance of SP. As discussed earlier in Section 2, this is evident in that many organisations in the Zambian public sector seem to have adopted its use. Considering the Zambian context as provided in Section 2, it is reasonable to expect organisations in Zambia to use SPPs which are based on a blend of SPP approaches and are comprehensive and inclusive. Strategy tools which enable the analysis and understanding of complex issues should be very beneficial. The role of planning functions is also expected to be critical for these organisations. However, the challenges of resource inadequacy may make it difficult for most organisations in a developing country like Zambia to develop very comprehensive and inclusive SPPs which make use of full planning functions and strategy tools. As such, these organisations should adopt processes which are fit for their resource base as they work towards growth and eliminating their barriers. This is the beauty of SP, it is scalable to every organisation's context.

Further, review of the accessible literature has shown that there is limited post-2011 strategic management literature and on the developing world context.

Key themes arising from this section include the following:

- a) That SP is important (Grant, 2003).



- b) That the SP field is complex (Song et al, 2015; Murphy, 2011). SP is a field without an agreed upon definition, with a variety of approaches and a wider range of characteristics, each of which is applied differently depending on specific contexts.
- c) That there is no one best way to implement SP, instead its implementation should be tailored to an organisation's context (Mintzberg, 1988).
- d) That organisations are increasingly using more inclusive, comprehensive and formal but flexible SPPs.
- e) That the implementation of SP continues to face barriers (Latif et al, 2012) despite recommendations by researchers on how to overcome them.

The next section, shaped by the literature on the Zambian context as provided in Section 2 and that on SP theory, aims to provide an account of SP in the public sector.

## **2.4 Strategic Planning in the Public Sector**

### **2.4.1 Overview**

This section provides a review of the literature on SP in the public sector. This review is shaped by the literature on SP theory and that on the Zambian context as provided in the previous two sections.

### **2.4.2 Justification for Strategic Planning in the Public Sector**

Adopted from the private sector, the use of SP in the public sector dates back four to five decades (Bryson and Roaring, 1988). The Zambian public sector adopted SP in 1993. The adoption of SP in the public sector has been driven by the need to strategically and proactively respond to increasingly dynamic environments. The increase in the dynamism of the environment has resulted from a number of factors including the rise in disasters such as earth quakes, draughts, terrorism, rapid technological developments, increasing globalisation, increasing interconnectedness between policy areas, the increasing interdependency between sectors and the increasing pressure for public accountability and better service delivery by citizens, elected officials and the media (Bryson, 2011, 2010; Poister, 2010, 2005; Hendrick, 2003; Berry, 1994). Additional forces that have contributed to the adoption of SP in the public sector include pressure from cooperating partners and its claimed success in the private sector (Bryson, 2011, 2010; Hendrick, 2003; Berry, 1994).

A number of researchers have argued that SP is beneficial to the public sector in many ways (E.g. Bryson, 2010; Poister, Pitts and Hamilton, 2010; Poister and streib, 2005). As discussed in Section 2.3.2, some of its benefits include: (a) providing both long term

direction and guidance for short and medium term decisions, (b) enhancing coordination and communication, (c) setting priorities and focusing of resource on key areas, (d) enhancing the appreciation of organisational goals among stakeholders resulting in stakeholders taking ownership of organisational programmes, (e) enhancing staff morale and commitment and (f) enhancing service delivery (Paul & Jarzabkowski, 2011; Wandjiva, 2011; Poister, 2010; Ugboro, Obeng and Spann, 2010; Bryson, Crosby and Bryson, 2009; the Fifth National Development Plan, 2006; Hendrick, 2003).

Based on the few benefits listed above, the characteristics of SPPs discussed below and the need for the public sector to manage strategically and proactively, it can be concluded that SP is, indeed, useful to the public sector. Literature on the future state of public sector SP indicates an expected increase in its importance and use in the coming years (Bryson, Berry and Yang, 2010; Bryson, 2010; Poister, 2010; Poister, Pitts and Hamilton, 2010).

Zambia, being a developing country with significant challenges in terms of resource availability, public participation in governance processes, resource allocation and coordination of government programmes (see Section 2.2 above), should be in a position to derive significant benefit from the use of SP. However, the flip side of this is that resource inadequacies could pose a barrier to its effective implementation. It should, however, be noted that the consideration of the impact and benefits of SP are outside the scope of this study

It is in view of the importance of SP and the public sector that this topic was selected for this study. Recommendations on how to improve SPPs for such an important sector should be very beneficial to both practitioners and service recipients. The next sub-sections turn to review the literature on the characteristics of the SPP in the public sector.

#### **2.4.3 Characteristics of Strategic Planning Processes in the Public Sector**

Section 2.3.5 above discussed SPP characteristics as they relate to various sectors. This section discusses SPP characteristics as they relate to the public sector and, where applicable, how they relate to the Zambian context. As has been discussed in earlier sections, the adoption of SP should take account of the context of each organisation (Williams and Lewis, 2008). Considering this, the manner and extent to which SPP characteristics are adopted in the public sector is likely to differ from other sectors.

#### **2.4.3.1           Comprehensiveness**

Comprehensiveness, defined by Fredrickson and Mitchell (1984) as the extent to which organisations attempt to be exhaustive and inclusive in making and integrating strategic decisions, is an important characteristic in ensuring the development and implementation of well thought out strategies that take a holistic view of the organisation and its environment.

There is a reasonable volume of literature examining comprehensiveness of SPPs in the public sector although much of it is on the western context (e.g. Poister, Pitts and Hamilton, 2010; Hendrick, 2003). The available literature seems to share consensus that comprehensiveness has a positive impact on the performance of public sector organisations (Poister, Pitts and Hamilton, 2010). Hendrick (2003), in her study of SP in departments in the city of Milwaukee found that departments that implemented more comprehensive planning achieved better performance in terms of strategic capacity. Her study measured comprehensiveness in terms of areas in which planning occurs (Planning scope), the environmental factors considered and the depth of analysis of these factors (Extent and depth of environmental analysis), the tools used and the sophistication of the planning process. Her operationalisation of the tools used was more aligned to process formality which she argued is related to comprehensiveness.

Another aspect of comprehensiveness which has attracted a lot of interest from researchers in public sector SP is that of integration of the SPP with other organisational processes (e.g. Poister, 2010, 2005; Ugboro, Obeng and Spann, 2010; Poister and Streib, 2005). The aspect of integration of SPPs with other organisational processes is one of the keys to overcoming the challenges of poor implementation of SPs (Poister, Pitts and Hamilton, 2010) in that it helps to drive the strategic agenda down through the whole organisation. It also results in increased coordination of an organisation's action. However, limited literature exists on the aspect of harmonisation of SP across public sector organisations. The few available studies on coordination of SP across government departments found a weakness in this aspect (e.g. Sulle, 2009; Green, 1998). This is an important aspect considering the inter-related and overlapping nature of public sector organisation mandates (Green, 1998), especially central government.

Another aspect of comprehensiveness which appears not to have been addressed is that of process completeness. The importance of process completeness is signaled by the apparent consensus in the literature regarding the need to link SP with other management processes

for it to be effective (Poister, 2010). Process completeness refers to the extent to which an organisation implements SP in its fullness in terms of strategy formulation, implementation and monitoring and review. It has been argued that more attention is focused on strategy formulation compared to the other stages of the SPP (Green, 1998). This perhaps explains why SP is seen as not generating the expected outcomes. Good formulation and appropriate content without good implementation and monitoring and review is a waste of time and effort as plans will not implement themselves (Poister, Pitts and Edwards, 2010). In line with this, Vries (2014) and Sulle (2009) found that public sector SP in Namibia and Tanzania suffers from poor monitoring and evaluation of the results from the implementation of SPs.

Various studies report that public sector organisations are increasingly using more comprehensive SPPs (e.g. Sulle, 2009; Poister and Streib, 2005; Jerome and Jacobs, 1987). Further, Bryson (2010) predicted an increase in demand for the use of more comprehensive approaches in terms of analysis, synthesis and integration of management processes. This increase in the use of comprehensive SPPs is necessitated by the nature of public sector organisations and their environments. As discussed above, these organisations are faced with a very wide range of environmental factors which are highly inter-related and subjected to increasingly rapid change. As such, public managers are finding comprehensive SPPs to be a means of managing which enables them to proactively take account of the various factors affecting their organisations. In line with the foregoing, though contrary to the findings by Fredrickson (1984) (see Section 2.3.5.1 above), Poister (2005) argues that strategic management is critical for organisations operating in unstable environments.

The SMM adopted by the Zambian public sector places a demand on ministries to be comprehensive in their SP. Comprehensiveness, however, requires the presence and commitment of adequate resources in terms of effective and efficient information gathering and management infrastructure, appropriate structures and human resource capacity (Green, 1998) which developing countries like Zambia may not afford. The lack of adequate resources to build these facilities is most likely to limit the comprehensiveness of SP in Zambia.

However, there is a lack of empirical evidence in the available literature on the extent to which the Zambian public sector's SPP is in fact comprehensive. Much of the available literature relates to public sector organisations from the western context and mainly from

developed countries. It, therefore, remains unclear whether public sector organisations from other contexts, especially developing countries in Africa, are making similar efforts in increasing the comprehensiveness of their SPPs as a means of addressing the various challenges affecting them such as poverty, unemployment, poor economic conditions etc. It is, nonetheless, logical to expect public sector organisations from these contexts to implement more comprehensive SP considering that they too are faced with many inter-related factors and increasingly dynamic environments.

#### **2.4.3.2 Formality and Flexibility**

Process formality has been defined in Section 2.3.5.2 as the degree to which the SPP is systematic, deliberate and orderly. Formality brings about order and coordination to planning activities. As such, complex organisations are more likely to use formal SPPs as their complexity requires more coordination. Ugboro, Obeng and Spann (2010), arguing in favor of formality, argued that the existence of written SPP procedures helps in ensuring a common understanding among those involved in SP.

On the other hand, formality is criticised on grounds that it stifles flexibility (Mintzberg, 1990). The more formal a process is, the less flexible it is likely to be. There is, however, such as a thing as building flexibility in formal processes (Ugboro, Obeng and Spann, 2010). Ugboro, Obeng and Spann (2010) argued that written procedures (formality) should leave room for flexibility to respond to changing environmental factors. The increasing dynamism of environments within which public organisation operate increases the importance of flexibility in public sector management processes.

Considering the complexity of public sector organisations in terms of size, number of stakeholders and number of services provided, it is expected that they can benefit from formality. Formality helps public managers to think systematically about their organisation's future and environments and to have control over the planning process and ensure it (the process) is appropriate for the organisation's context (Poister, 2010). Poister (2010) argued that formality of SPPs in the public sector has increased with the increase in their experience with SP. The use of formal SPPs in the public sector is evidenced by some empirical studies such as that by Sulle (2009).

The presence of the SMM as a guiding framework for the Zambian public sector implies the use of formal processes in SP. However, the question of the actual extent to which these processes are formal and flexible, in the Zambian public sector, remains unexplored.

#### **2.4.3.3 Role and Structure of Planning Functions**

Planning functions play a critical role in ensuring the successful implementation of SP in the public sector (Bryson and Roering, 1988). Bryson, Crosby and Bryson (2009) argued that having skilled planning staff is critical to successful SP. As discussed in Section 2.3.5.3, the role of planning functions is likely to be more significant in larger and complex organisations.

The public sector has also seen the role of planning functions evolved. Poister (2010), Hendrick (2003) and Bryson and Roering (1987) all emphasise that the role of planning functions should not be that of formulating plans but rather that of coordinating, facilitating and supporting planning efforts across the organisation. Planning function support activities could include: formulation of the planning procedures, formulation of assumptions, challenging management thinking, carrying out data analysis and providing information to managers and consolidating and documenting plans. Line managers may not have the time and skills to carry out these roles and so by having these roles carried out by planning staff, managers are left to concentrate on their management work. Actual SP formulation should be left to line managers. This should ensure that line managers take ownership of the resulting plans which should ultimately increase the likelihood of successful implementation.

Hendrick (2003) argues that good working relationships between planning staff, top management and line management is key to effective SP. Another key aspect related to planning functions is their location and position within the organisation. Their location should be such that it shows management's commitment to SP and gives them adequate power and authority to carry out their work.

The staffing structure of planning functions is also a critical aspect which appears not to have been explored in public sector research. As argued by Grant (2003), the staffing of planning functions by a combination of planning specialists and selected staff from line management should improve both plan quality and implementation quality.

There is, however, scant evidence in the literature regarding the roles and structures of planning functions in public sector organisations, more so in developing countries in Africa.

#### 2.4.3.4 Stakeholder Participation

As discussed in Section 2.3.5.4, stakeholder participation is a measure of the extent to which an organisation attempts to be inclusive in its SPP. Bryson & Roering (1987:11) defined stakeholders as,

*“Any individual, group, or other organisation that can place a claim on the organisation’s attention, resources, or output or is affected by that output”.*

One of the key distinguishing features of the public sector is the breadth of stakeholders it deals with. Consequently, stakeholder participation is an important characteristic of SPPs in the public sector. The extent of stakeholder participation will influence the degree of coordination, the extent to which stakeholders take ownership of strategies, the quality of strategies formulated and the likelihood of successful implementation.

There is consensus in public sector SPP literature that wider participation of both internal and external stakeholders is associated with effective SP and improved performance (Poister, Pitts and Hamilton, 2010; Poister and streib, 2005; Poister, 2005; Hendrick, 2003; Bryson & Roering, 1987).

Regarding internal stakeholders, Ugboro, Obeng and Spann’s (2010) study of SP as an effective tool of strategic management found that effective SP requires top managers to play an active role in defining the strategic direction of the organisation and in creating an environment that recognise SP as a tool of strategic management. They also found that it requires good working relationships between SP staff, unit or division managers and top management teams. These findings were in line with the findings by Poister (2005) who found high involvement of both top management and middle management in SPPs of state departments of transport in the US and thus argued that one of the key success factors of SP is widespread participation of managers and employees at various stages of the process.

Of particular interest in public management is the role and influence of external stakeholders. External stakeholders, such as citizens, donors, pressure groups, service recipients and suppliers, have significant influence on various aspects of public organisations. This, therefore, entails that it is very critical that these stakeholders are engaged in SPPs (Poister and Streib, 2005). In support of the foregoing, Poister (2010:s248) states that;

*“Given the boundary-spanning nature of many of the issues they are confronting, public agencies need to make greater efforts to be more inclusive in their strategic planning,*

*inviting key external stakeholders to become involved in parts of the process or making greater efforts to solicit input from outsiders”.*

In line with this, Poister, Pitts and Hamilton (2010) in their review and synthesis of literature found consensus that participation of external stakeholders is associated with effective SP and Bryson (2010) predicted an increase in the use of more inclusive approaches in public sector SP.

Engaging external stakeholders is helpful in improving the quality of SP by bringing to light aspects which internal stakeholders may overlook. It also enhances external stakeholders' understanding of government programmes thus enhancing the legitimacy of public organisations and reducing resistance to reforms. Further, wider participation helps in early identification of potential conflict which provides an opportunity to resolve them before any resource commitment is made. In line with this, Poister (2010) argued that SP, by promoting dialogue, helps to build consensus around and commitment to strategic initiatives.

Sulle's (2009) study of SP in Tanzania found that public agencies in that country engage a wide range of stakeholders. This is, however, an unusual finding considering that Tanzania is a developing country and that the common complaint in such countries is that of poor engagement of external stakeholders in public management. Contrary to the Tanzanian situation, an empirical study by Poister (2005) in the United Kingdom found that only a few departments studied extended participation to external stakeholders. Considering that the reasons for poor external stakeholder participation seem not to have been investigated in his study, it can be speculated that this could have been due to one of two reasons or both. Managers in departments that did not engage external stakeholders may not have considered it as important and/or secondly poor participation could have been due to the difficulties associated with it as discussed below.

Despite the benefits of wide participation outlined above, it should be noted that wider participation introduces more complications and difficulties to the SPP (Hendrick, 2003). Poister, Pitts, and Hamilton (2010) argued that involving too many stakeholders in SP can create resource and time dilemmas and encourage more disagreements on key issues. Their review found that research seems to respond to these challenges by recommending for top management support with at least representative participation from stakeholders.



The existence of a wider stakeholder base brings to light the need for public managers to develop capabilities in identifying, analysing and managing key stakeholders. This can be achieved through the use of tools like stakeholder mapping. See Section 2.4.3.5 for a detailed discussion on the use of strategy tools.

The Zambian public sector recognises the need for wide stakeholder engagement in SPPs. Zambia's SMM emphasises the importance of identifying key stakeholders and engaging them in the process. During the reintroduction of national planning in 2002, the Zambian Government created SAGs as vehicles for engaging various stakeholders in planning. Further, the President then, the late Levy P Mwanawasa, in launching the Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP) made the following appeal:

*“I would like to appeal to all national stakeholders to play their part in ensuring the success of this Plan ...” (Levy P Mwanawasa, 2002: ii).*

However, the concerns identified in Section 2.2.6 regarding low stakeholder inclusiveness in the Zambian governance system raises questions as to the actual extent to which the SPPs in the Zambian public sector are inclusive. The extent and nature of stakeholder participation in SP in the public sectors of developing countries in Africa still remains largely unexplored. Exploring this area should generate very interesting findings considering the challenges faced by organisations in these countries in terms of the lack of resources such as finances and manpower capabilities. Findings in this area should also provide feedback on whether efforts by donors in providing resources aimed at enhancing capabilities for stakeholder engagement are bearing any fruit.

#### **2.4.3.5 Use of Strategy Tools**

A wide range of tools have been developed to assist organisations in SP. As has been highlighted in Section 2.3.5.5, strategy tools aid and guide managers in making strategic decisions by providing a systematic structure for generating and analysing information and alternatives, for selecting choices and for measuring performance.

Considering that public organisations face complex environments and multiple stakeholders, it is expected that they can benefit significantly from the use of tools which can enable them to dynamically consider all relevant factors and manage stakeholders. In line with this, Williams and Lewis (2008) argued that strategy tools are relevant and applicable to public organisations but that these should be adapted to respond to the contexts of public organisations. Their study found widespread use of the value chain

analysis and stakeholder mapping tools. Further, their finding that combined application of tools resulted in greater analytical power is consistent with the findings in other sectors (e.g. Jarratt, and Stiles, 2010). Applied dynamically and properly, tools such as SWOT, PESTLE, stakeholder mapping and the 9Ms model should be able to help public managers to make informed and appropriate strategic decisions. There is, however, scanty evidence on the manner and extent to which strategy tools are used in the public sector.

Section 2.3.5.5 indicated that the use of strategy tools is influenced by the educational background of managers. Considering that part of the PSRP in Zambia involved recruiting more qualified personnel, one expects to find higher usage of strategy tools in the Zambian public sector. However, no empirical investigation has been undertaken to confirm this.

#### **2.4.4 Barriers to Effective Strategic Planning in the Public Sector**

In recognition of the difficulties and challenges of SPPs in public sector organisations, Bryson, Crosby and Bryson (2009:177) stated that:

*“Strategic planning processes must be designed and assembled to cope with multiple possible sources of failure, or they are likely to fail”.*

Barriers to SP relate to any factors that prevent its effective implementation (see Section 2.3.6). Like private sector organisations, public organisations also face barriers in implementing SP. In fact, public sector organisations are expected to be vulnerable to more barriers because of their nature, for example, in terms of multiple stakeholders, bureaucratic structures, resources inadequacy (Sulle, 2009), nature of control processes and political basis of financing and resources allocation (Backoff, Wechsler and Crew, 1993).

A significant contribution in this regard is provided by Boyne et al (2004) who claims to have undertaken the first empirical study on problems of SP in the public sector. Categorising SP problems into technical and political problems, they found that SP problems arise from technical rather than political problems. The finding that political factors do not contribute to the problems of SP is not consistent with much of the theory (e.g. Barclay, Schalkwyk and Pauw, 2011; Sulle, 2009; Bryson and Roering, 1988). The fact that SP is designed to produce change, which people generally resent, leads to the expectation that it is likely to face resistance. Perhaps, Boyne et al.’s (2004)’s surprising findings could be due to their choice of measures for political factors. In terms of resource problems, Sulle’s (2009) findings confirmed Boyne et al.’s (2004) findings that resource inadequacies are a significant challenge to SP in the public sector.

Vries (2014) and Yambwa (2014) both looking at the Namibian public sector identified the following barriers: lack of commitment and team work, poor communication, lack of alignment between strategy and organisational structure and culture, lack of integration of employee performance appraisal systems and SPs, resource inadequacy, lack of integration of SP and budgeting processes, leadership inadequacies, lack of staff capabilities and poor involvement of key stakeholders. Vries (2014) and Barclay, Schalkwyk and Pauw (2011) found political interference to be a major barrier. With the exception of political interference, the rest of the barriers are identical to those identified in other sectors (See 2.3.6).

The barrier of the lack of resources is two-fold. Firstly, public organisations may not have resources to develop SPs and secondly, they may not have resources to implement the resulting SPs. This barrier brings to light the importance of carrying out feasibility studies of proposed strategies. It is pointless to develop a very good SP without assessing its feasibility.

Considering that SP is no longer new to the public sector, it is logical to expect some of the long standing barriers to be overcome by now. It is, however, surprising that some of these barriers have continued to be thorns despite the many proposals made by researchers on how to address them. Some of the proposals for addressing these barriers include: improving communication, enhancing the alignment of SP with other organisational process, improving management and leadership, improving staff capacity and aligning organisational structures with SPs (Vries, 2014; Yambwa, 2014).

Could it be that public organisations are not making adequate efforts to eradicate them or that the proposals are not practical or perhaps public managers are not aware of these proposals? Much more effort is required if SP is to be effectively implemented in the public sector. Further, much more empirical research is required to examine the extent to which other barriers reported in the literature pose a challenge to the implementation of SP in the public sector.

#### **2.4.5 Summary**

This section has provided justification for the use of SPPs in the public sector. It has also provided a review of the literature on selected SPP characteristics and on barriers to SP in the public sector. The Zambian public sector context has been taken into account in reviewing this literature.

Key themes arising from this chapter include the following:

- a) That SP is useful for public sector organisations.
- b) That the complexity of the SPP is also evident in the public sector.
- c) Public sector organisations are adopting more inclusive, comprehensive and formal but flexible SPPs.
- d) That there is scanty literature on the extent of use of strategy tools in public sector SPPs.
- e) Public sector organisations also experience barriers in their implementation of SP.
- f) That there is limited literature on SPPs of the public sectors of developing countries.

The preceding sections have justified the importance of SP to organisations regardless of their sector or industry. Particularly, the importance of SP to public sector organisations has been established. Section 3.2 has demonstrated the importance and role of the public sector in ensuring social and economic development in Zambia. Further, Section 3.2 has established that the Zambian public sector adopted the use of SP in 1993 although the nature and extent of its implementation in practice has not been subjected to critical review. The lack of empirical review of the nature and extent of use of SPPs in the Zambian public sector presents a gap in the literature which this research addressed.

The next chapter synthesises the findings from the literature review.

## **CHAPTER 3                    LITERATURE SYNTHESIS**

### **3.1      Overview**

The preceding literature review has established the importance of SP, its complexity, its increasing adoption as a management tool in public sector organisations and the importance of the role played by the public sector in Zambia. It has also established the increasing complexity of the challenges facing public sector organisations due to the presence of increasingly dynamic environments and that in the face of such challenges, SP offers a viable mechanism for proactive and strategic management.

Further, the importance of SP in helping the *Zambian* public sector in enhancing economic diversification, in addressing the challenges of inequitable resource distribution and poor living conditions and in improving public service delivery has been established. Furthermore, the preceding literature review has established that no empirical investigation of the use of SPPs in the *Zambian* public sector has been carried out.

This chapter synthesizes the findings from the literature review.

### **3.2      Literature Synthesis**

There exists a significant volume of literature on SP (e.g. Bryson, 2010; Sulle, 2009; Hendrick, 2003; Mintzberg, 1994). It, however, appears that much of this literature was published prior to 2011 with very little of it dating after this year, more so in relation to developing countries. Notwithstanding this, a reasonable volume of post 2011 literature on SP was referred to in addition to post 2008 literature which is also reasonably recent. The presence of limited post 2011 SP literature presents a gap and thus an opportunity to update the literature with the current realities of SP.

SP is important in helping organisations to improve their performance in the face of dynamic environments (Poister, 2005). Effective SP should be particularly helpful to the *Zambian* public sector in enhancing economic diversification, in addressing the challenges of inequitable resource distribution and poor living conditions and in improving public service delivery.

The importance of the role played by SP has seen it being adopted by many organisations, be it in the private or public or non-profit sectors (e.g. Brockmann and Lacho, 2015; Poister 2010; Grant, 2003). In the case of the *Zambia* public sector, it was adopted in 1993

(Management Development Division, 2001). There is, however, still no consensus regarding the effect of SP on organisational performance (Murphy, 2011).

SP is complex (Song et al, 2015). The complexity of SP is evident in the existence of multiple approaches and characteristics (see Sections 2.3.4 and 2.3.5). These approaches have evolved over time in order to better align SPPs to the present day needs of organisations (Ansoff, 1991). SPP approaches differ in the emphasis each places on different characteristics of the process. The SPP characteristics of interest in this study include; comprehensiveness, formality and flexibility, the role and structure of planning functions, stakeholder participation and use of strategy tools. These are summarised in the Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1 Characteristics of Strategic Planning**

<b>SPP Characteristics</b>	<b>Authors</b>
Comprehensiveness	Poister, Pitts and Hamilton, (2010), Grant (2003), Hendrick, (2003), Haug (1997), Kukalis (1991), Ramanujam and Venkatraman (1987b), Ryne's (1987), Fredrickson and Mitchell (1984)
Formality and Flexibility	Ugboro, Obeng and Spann (2010), Haug (1997), Kukalis (1991), Ryne's (1987),
Role and Structure of Planning Functions	Grant (2003), Hendrick (2003), Kukalis (1991), Bryson and Roering (1987),
Stakeholder Participation	Poister (2010), Grant (2003), Haug (1997), Bryson and Roering (1987)
Use of Strategy Tools	Murphy (2011), Jarratt and Stiles (2010), Williams and Lewis (2008), Gunn and Williams (2007).

The nature and extent to which organisations adopt these characteristics is influenced by environmental and organisational factors (Haug, 1997). There is, therefore, no one best approach to SP as no two organisations will be faced by exactly the same challenges and factors, be it environmental or organisational. The SPP will differ from one organisation to another depending on each organisation's specific situation (Murphy, 2011).

Review of the literature has shown that both private and public sector organisations are increasingly adopting more inclusive, comprehensive and formal but flexible SPPs (Poister and Streib, 2005; Grant, 2003). Like private sector organisations, public sector organisations have also seen a change in the role played by planning functions from that of planning to that of providing support to and coordination of the SPP (Grant, 2003;

Hendrick, 2003). However, scanty evidence exists regarding the use of strategy tools in public sector organisations.

Bryson, Crosby, and Bryson (2009:176) argued that SPPs must be “*designed and assembled to cope with multiple possible sources of failure, or they are likely to fail*”. This is due to the existence of barriers to the process, something many researchers have recognised, documented and attempted to address (Vries, 2014; Yambwa, 2014; Suklev and Debarliev, 2012; O'Regan and Ghobadian, 2002). It, however, appears that much of the effort to address these barriers has been directed towards those affecting the strategy formulation stage. Table 3.2 below provides a summary of the key barriers assessed in the current research.

**Table 3.2 Barriers to Strategic Planning**

Barriers	Authors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate staff capabilities</li> <li>• Inadequate resources</li> <li>• Poor communication</li> <li>• Inappropriate organisation culture</li> <li>• Inappropriate management and leadership</li> <li>• Lack of alignment of performance appraisal systems to SPs</li> <li>• Political interference and vested interest</li> <li>• Poor involvement of key stakeholders</li> </ul>	Vries (2014), Yambwa (2014), Latif et al. (2012), Barclay, Schalkwyk and Pauw, (2011), Boyne, Williams, Law, and Walker (2004), O'Regan and Ghobadian (2002), Beer and Eisenstat (2000), Kargarand Blumenthal (1994),
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor enforcement mechanism</li> </ul>	

The literature shows that these barriers have been thorns to SP since time in memorial. This is despite proposals on measures to overcome them. The proposals identified in the literature include: improving staff and leadership capacity, enhancing alignment of SP with other organisational processes, greater stakeholder involvement and aligning organisational structures with SPs (Vries, 2014; Yambwa, 2014). There, however, appears to be no measures proposed to address the barriers of political interference thus presenting a gap in the literature. Engagement of political leaders in SP should be able to address this barrier. In Zambia, the means of enforcing the requirement for all ministries to implement SP is a cabinet circular. This may not be an effective means. The use of legislation may provide a stronger enforcement mechanism.

Much of the research on public sector SP appears to have focused on the western world. Limited research has been carried out in developing countries (Elbenna, 2013). In the case of Zambia, despite having adopted SP in 1993, it appears no critical review has been undertaken on the nature and extent to which it has actually been implemented. This gap, created by the absence of any critical review of the nature and extent to which such a powerful tool has been implemented in such an important sector in Zambia, has necessitated the need to carry out this research.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

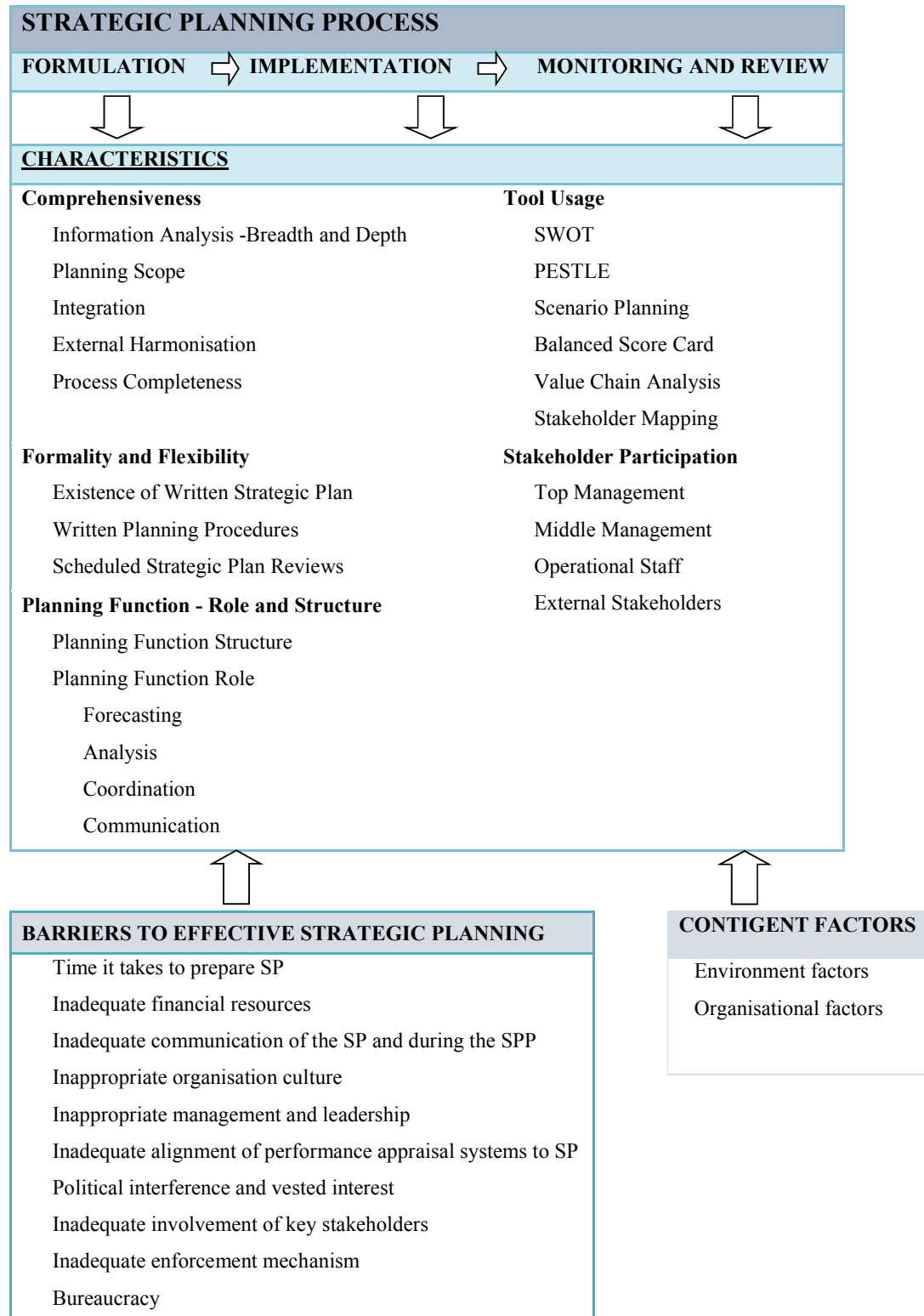
Figure 3.1 summarises the various aspects of the SPP arising from the literature review above and thus informs the current research. The findings from this research, therefore, should establish the extent to which the SPPs of the Zambian public sector in reality and as portrayed in Figure 2.1 match with the aspects summarised in Figure 3.1. The SPP comprises strategy formulation, implementation and monitoring and review. In each of these stages, the SPP is characterised by various characteristics including comprehensiveness, formality and flexibility, role and structure of planning functions, use of strategy tools and stakeholder participation.

Contingent on various environmental and organisational factors, ideal SPPs in the public sector should pay attention to all the stages and should be formal but flexible, comprehensive and inclusive of a wide range of stakeholders (Poister and Streib, 2005; Grant, 2003). Further, planning functions should have a place in top management and their role should mainly be that of providing support to and coordination of the SPPs (Grant, 2003; Hendrick, 2003). Furthermore, the use of strategy tools should be helpful in assisting public managers undertake SP. Barriers, however, exist which prevent the effective implementation of SP.

Despite having adopted SP in 1993, the extent to which SPPs in the Zambian public sector exhibit the features described above is not clear, thus presenting the gap which this research filled. The above discussed features, as derived from the literature, informed this research in that they were used as a benchmark against which the realities of SPPs in the Zambian public sector were compared. Based on this comparison, recommendations were developed to fill the identified gap.



**Figure 3.1 Strategic Planning Process Framework**



### **3.3.1 Research Question, Aim and Objectives**

Informed by the preceding literature review and the identified gap with regard to the extent and nature of SPPs adopted by the Zambian public sector, the current research addressed the following research question, aim and objectives:

#### **Research Question**

To what extent has the Zambian public sector adopted effective strategic planning?

#### **Research Aim**

The aim of this research was to investigate the nature and extent of adoption of strategic planning processes in the Zambian public sector

#### **Research Objective**

1. Based on 20 ministries, to investigate the current strategic planning processes used by the Zambian public sector.
2. To compare and evaluate the strategic planning processes within the Zambian public sector against strategic planning literature.
3. To identify and investigate the major barriers to effective strategic planning experienced by the Zambian public sector.
4. To develop a set of guidelines on the strategic planning process and recommendations on how the guidelines can be effectively implemented, to assist effective strategic planning in the Zambian public sector.

Considering the complexity of SP, the research was conducted using a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The next chapter provides more details on the research methodology adopted for this study.

## **CHAPTER 4                      RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1        Overview**

The preceding chapter has provided a synthesis of the literature review and backing for the research question, aim and objectives. This chapter provides a detailed account of the methodology that was used to address the research question, aim and objectives. In line with the recommendations by Roberts, Wallace and Farrell (2003), this chapter provides enough detail to the extent that other researchers can easily understand and apply the methodology on similar studies. In particular, this chapter provides a detailed account of the following areas: the research paradigm adopted, the research design and strategy applied, the sample design, accessibility, data collection, data analysis and ethics.

### **4.2        Research Paradigm**

The design of research is affected by the philosophical approach adopted by a researcher. In business and management research the two dominant philosophical approaches are the positivism and the phenomenology paradigms. Under the positivist paradigm, the research design is based on a primarily quantitative and objective philosophy, with a focus on answering questions on existence and occurrence as opposed to questions on reasons for the identified existence and occurrence. This approach is primarily suitable for research involving variables that can be quantified and objectively measured. Under the phenomenological paradigm, the research design is based on a primarily qualitative and subjective philosophy with a focus on generating understanding of why something happens the way it does. This approach is primarily suitable for research on highly complex areas involving variables that cannot be easily quantified and for research which seeks to develop deep understanding of the way things happen using subjective assessments (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Roberts, Wallace and Farrell, 2003)

Considering the complexity of the SP field in terms of the nature and number of actors and variables at play in its implementation and also considering the focus of this research on developing a deep understanding of the extent and nature of use of SPPs in the Zambian public sector, a mixed methods approach was adopted.

Based on this approach, the research was conducted using a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Mixed methods approaches provide an opportunity to maximise on the strengths of each of the two approaches and for methodological triangulation. Further, it enhances the generation of well-balanced conclusions (Molina-Azorin, 2012;

Bryman & Bell, 2011; Creswell et al, 2011). Poister, Pitts and Hamilton (2010) argued that a mix of methods that incorporate both quantitative and qualitative data is the strongest approach for research in SP and management to take. Molina-Azorin (2012) and Jogulu and Pansiri (2011) also argue in favor of the use of mixed methods approaches although Jogulu & Pansiri's (2011) study suffer the limitation of being based on a sample of only two organisations. A number of studies on strategic management have been successfully undertaken using a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches (e.g. Elbanna, 2013; Murphy, 2011; Poister, 2005; Ryder, 2005)

The qualitative approach was evident in the use a combination of semi-structured interviews and documentary review. One senior planning officer from each of thirteen ministries of the Zambian Government was requested to complete the interview and to provide some of the documents they used in SP e.g. procedural manuals and SPs. This approach ensured the development of in-depth understanding of the current SPPs and the extent to which they have been adopted in the Zambian public sector.

The quantitative approach was evident in the use of a self-completion questionnaire. Six officers from each of sixteen government ministries were requested to complete a survey questionnaire. By generating quantitative data on the extent of adoption of SPP practices, the questionnaire helped to validate findings from the interviews. Elbanna (2013), Murphy (2011), Ryder (2005) and Hendrick (2003) all successfully used a combination of interviews and questionnaires in similar studies.

The inclusion of officers from the interviews in the questionnaire survey helped to achieve methodical triangulation through the use of three research methods to collect the same kind of data from the same participates. Validation was achieved by involving sixteen government ministries and by the inclusion of multiple respondents from each ministry.

The research design and strategy used is the focus of the next section

### **4.3 Research Design and Strategy.**

The research was conducted based on a series of cross sectional case studies and adopted a type C exploratory based multiple sample approach (e.g. Elbanna, 2013; Murphy, 2011; Yusoff, 1998). An exploratory based multiple sample approach is one with no formal hypothesis and in which more than one sample is evaluated. Alternative approaches

include the exploratory based single sample, the hypothesis based single sample and the hypothesis based multiple sample (Roberts, Wallace and Farrell, 2003).

The case study approach is suitable for research which aim to develop deep understanding, have a focus on contemporary and complex issues and in which the researcher needs to interact with participants (Yin, 1994). The use of a cross sectional multiple sample case study research approach was considered appropriate for addressing the aim of this study in that it enabled the consideration of a wider sample as compared to using a longitudinal research approach. The extent of adoption cannot be reliably assessed by considering only one government ministry. The major limitation of cross sectional case study approaches regarding the production of data of limited value was addressed by carefully designing the research and by the use of semi-structured interviews which were designed in a way that ensured the achievement of in-depth understanding (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

As indicated in the research paradigm section above, the research was based on a mixed methods approach employing qualitative and quantitative methods. The Qualitative method involved the use of semi-structured interviews and documentary review for data collection while the quantitative method was based on a self-completion questionnaire survey.

Due to the challenges encountered during the pilot study regarding access to respondents, these methods were applied one after the other as opposed to the initial plan of using a phased approach. As discussed later in Chapter 5, the pilot study revealed that due to protocol issues and to the fact that civil servants in Zambia are very busy and that a one-time access only would be granted, it was not going to be feasible to engage ministries for the same study several times.

#### **4.3.1 Qualitative Approach: Semi-Structured Interviews and Documentary Review**

Semi-structured interviews have been used by several researchers in the field of strategic management (e.g. Murphy, 2011; Barzelay & Jacobsen, 2009; Hendrick, 2003). Semi-structured interviews as opposed to structured interviews were considered appropriate due to the need for detailed explanations from respondents.

Documents reviewed included ministry SPs and SPP procedures and forms. Documents provided a very important source of validation data and also helped in reducing the length of interviews and questionnaires.

The interviews were guided by a pre-determined interview prompt sheet (see Appendix 1). The interview prompt sheet was designed in a way that enabled the researcher to obtain a wide range of data, ranging from data on each ministry's context and on the Zambian public sector as a whole to data on the specific adoption and application of selected SPP characteristics. Open-ended questions, as opposed to closed "yes" or "no" questions, were adopted in order to create an opportunity for respondents to provide as much relevant detail as possible. A brief outline of the interview prompt sheet is provided below:

### **Section 1: Respondent Information**

This section aimed to establish the respondent's length of service in their current ministry and in the public sector as whole and also how long they had been involved in SP both in their current ministry and in other ministries. This information was useful in creating a context for each respondent's submissions.

### **Section 2: Strategic Planning Process Characteristics.**

This section aimed at establishing the extent and manner to which various SPP characteristics were evident in each ministry. Characteristics covered included: comprehensiveness, formality and flexibility, role and structure of planning functions, stakeholder participation and use of strategy tools. Information on any changes in ministry SPPs over the past years was also sought. In some instances, respondent views on necessary changes in future were sought. Figure 3.1 above provides a detailed summary of the operationalisation of each of these characteristics.

Questions on SPP comprehensiveness sought to establish how much of both internal and external environmental analysis was carried out, the relative importance assigned to each, the environmental analysis tools used, the extent and nature of process integration, the extent to which all elements of the SPP received attention and the extent of harmonisation of ministry SP with overall government plans and other ministry plans. The impact of the presence/absence of plan harmonisation was explored.

On planning formality and flexibility, questions addressed issues like the existence of written SPs, the frequency with which plan reviews were scheduled and the existence of documented planning procedures and guidelines.

One of the major features of the public sector is its wide range of stakeholders with varying vested interest. Considering this, questions sought to establish the breadth of both internal and external stakeholder involvement, covering tools used for stakeholders identification,

what roles selected stakeholders played, how the views of both internal and external stakeholders were obtained and the impact and management of vested interests in strategy formulation and implementation

Questions on the role and structure of planning functions sought to establish the positioning of heads of planning in ministry organisation structures, how planning functions were staffed, how they operated and the roles they carried out.

### **Section 3: Barriers to Strategic Planning.**

This section aimed to ascertain the barriers to SP in the Zambian public sector. Information on changes in barriers over the past years and on what barriers respondents saw as being a challenge in future was also sought. Further, this section aimed to establish the measures being taken by the Zambian public sector to address these barriers.

### **Section 4: General Ministry Information.**

This section aimed to establish a contextual overview of each ministry in terms of ministry size and age, employee qualification levels, extent of decentralisation of decision making and environmental characteristics. Further, information on whether each ministry had adopted SP and on the reasons for either adoption or non-adoption was sought.

### **Section 5: Any Other Issues**

In this section, respondents were given an opportunity to provide any information they felt was not covered in the interview.

#### **4.3.2 Quantitative Approach: Self-Completion Questionnaire**

The self-completion questionnaire survey was applied on sixteen government ministries in Zambia. Questionnaires are an established tool in research of this nature (e.g. Murphy, 2011; Ugboro, Obeng and Spann, 2010; Haug, 1997).

The questionnaire was designed to generate the same information as that generated by the interviews. A copy of the questionnaire is at Appendix.2. The question design was mainly in statement form, requiring confirmation or otherwise from respondents and in 7 (1-7) point Likert scale question form. A similar question structure was used by Elbanna (2013), Murphy (2011), Ugboro, Obeng & Spann (2010), and Poister and Streib (2005). This form of question design reduced the amount of time and effort required to complete the questionnaire and contributed to increasing the response rate.

Both the interview prompt sheet and the questionnaire were subjected to review by my supervisor and by ten (10) local SP practitioners in order to test both documents for user friendliness, comprehensiveness, completeness, consistency and applicability. Elbanna (2013) used a similar verification approach. Both methods were pilot tested in the researcher's organisations and in one ministry. Details on how this ministry was selected are in Section 4.4 while details of the process and results of the pilot study are in Chapter 5.

To enhance the response rate, the researcher sought the partnership and collaboration of the MDD. In exchange for providing details on the researcher's findings to the MDD, the researcher was allowed to quote the collaboration with the division in his introduction to ministries. Murphy (2011) used a similar approach by creating a collaboration with the Society of Chartered Surveyor (SCS) and by informing respondents of her relationship with the SCS. Permission to undertake the study in each ministry was sought from respective Permanent Secretaries. This measure helped the researcher to obtain the cooperation of respondents.

The next section provides an outline of the Sample design.

#### **4.4 Sample Design**

As stated earlier, this study was based on a series of cross sectional case studies of sixteen government ministries in Zambia. Ministries were targeted for this research because they represent the highest level of the Zambian public sector and all other government agencies receive guidance from them. If ministries fail to show commitment to SP and to implement SP properly, then all other government agencies are likely to follow suit. As such, it was considered appropriate to apply this study on Ministries.

Using ministries highlighted the nature and extent of adoption of SP at the highest level of the Zambian public sector. This, however, presented a limitation that the findings would not be representative of what was obtaining at lower levels and in other government agencies. Notwithstanding this limitation, focusing the study at this level provided a good starting point for research on the use of SPPs in the Zambian public sector as all lower level government organisations depend on ministries for guidance. The extent of adoption of SPPs at levels lower than ministries and in non-ministerial public organisations was outside the scope of this study.



In terms of ministries, the sample for this study was derived from a sampling frame of twenty (20) ministries while in terms of individual respondents, the sampling frame comprised all officers concerned with SP in all the ministries. A non-random sample of six respondents was selected from each of sixteen (16) ministry resulting in a total of ninety six (96) respondents for both the qualitative and quantitative surveys. The use of a non-random sample however presented higher risks of sampling error in terms of biases such as researcher judgement bias (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This was mitigated by the use of multiple respondents from numerous ministries. Further, the nature of the study, i.e. generating a deep understanding of SPPs of the Zambian public sector, necessitated the use of a purposely selected sample as opposed to a random one. The sample was purposely selected to target respondents who had relevant information on the SPPs of each ministry.

A detailed explanation of how these respondents were distributed between the pilot study, qualitative research and quantitative research is provided in the following three sections.

#### **4.4.1 Pilot Study Sample**

The pilot study was conducted on one purposively selected ministry. This ministry was purposely selected in that ministries were first grouped into those that had a planning department or unit and those that did not. It was then purposively selected from the former category. The reason for selecting a ministry with a planning department was that more relevant information was expected to be derived from such a ministry. Both the interview and questionnaire survey were pilot tested in this ministry. The sample size was restricted to one ministry to avoid significantly reducing the number of ministries for the main study.

The choice and number of respondents was selected to reflect the structure of the main study. One senior officer from the Planning department was interviewed to test the interview prompt sheet and the researcher's interviewing skills. Six officers, including the officer who was interviewed, were requested to complete the questionnaire. The other five officers were one senior officer from each of the Finance, Human Resources, Procurement and Information Technology departments and one from a department in the ministry's core business.

The pilot study respondents were, however, not the same as those involved in the main study but rather practitioners, cognisant with SP processes, due to the fact that the researcher only had one opportunity to engage each respondents. This was necessitated by the fact that public servants in Zambia are very busy and finding time to engage them in

the research more than once proved a challenge. This sample of respondents was purposively selected and deemed ‘representative’ of other ministries where SP is taking place.

#### **4.4.2 Qualitative Study Sample**

The semi-structured interviews were targeted at a census of all the twenty ministries. This was well above the 4 to 10 cases as recommended by Eisenhardt (1989b).

The aim was to conduct one interview with a senior planning officer from each of the twenty ministries, resulting in a total of twenty interviews. The nature of research necessitated the engagement of senior officers who were involved in SP. For ministries that did not have a Planning department but had adopted SP, the interview was conducted with any senior member of staff who had a leading role in SP

A summary of the semi-structured interview sample and response rates is given in Table 4.1

**Table 4.1 Summary of Semi-Structured Interview Sample and Response Rates**

	<b>Ministries</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Target	20	20
Actual	13	14
Response Rate (%)	65	70

#### **4.4.3 Quantitative Survey Sample**

The questionnaire survey was targeted at all the twenty ministries including the one which was involved in the pilot study. All the twenty ministries, as opposed to getting a smaller sample, were targeted for the study in order to establish a more generaliseable position in response to the research question. Six senior officers from each ministry, including the one from the qualitative interview, were requested to complete the questionnaire.

The respondents included officers serving in SP functions and officers from the Accounts, Human Resources, Procurement and Information Technology departments and one department in the ministry’s core business. This combination of respondents provided for validation of responses. The inclusion of officers from Accounts, Human Resources and

Procurement departments more specifically provided insight into the extent of integration of ministry SPPs with other ministry processes such as budgeting, employee performance appraisals and procurement. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 provide a summary of the details of the questionnaire sample and response rates

**Table 4.2 Summary of Questionnaire Survey Sample and Response Rate**

	<b>Ministries</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Target	20	120
Actual	16	56
Response Rate (%)	80	47

**Table 4.3 Summary of Questionnaire Survey Sample and Response Rates by Department**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Targeted Respondents Based on Actual Ministries engaged</b>	<b>Actual Respondents</b>	<b>Response rate (%)</b>
Planning	16	22	138
Human Resource	16	13	81
Accounts	16	6	38
Procurement	16	1	6
Information Technology	16	2	13
Core Business	16	12	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>58</b>

As can be seen from Table 4.3, some ministries nominated more respondents from Planning departments than was planned for. This could imply limited participation of other departments in SP.

#### **4.5 Accessibility**

As indicated in the sample design section above, data was collected from sixteen government ministries. Access was secured through letters to Controlling Officers of each ministry requesting for permission to undertake the research. Prior to engaging the Controlling Officers, the researcher sought the support of the MDD by requesting them to

provide him with a letter of introduction to the ministries to request them to provide the necessary cooperation. In return for this letter, the researcher offered to provide the MDD with a copy of his thesis after the study. Murphy (2011) used a similar approach in her study.

Letters from Controlling Officers granting the researcher permission to undertake the research were received and were used as the basis to collect data from the ministries. The list of ministries to which access was granted is provided below;

**No.      Organisation Name**

1.      Management Development Division
2.      Ministry of Local Government and Housing.
3.      Ministry of Gender and Child Development.
4.      Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.
5.      Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection.
6.      Ministry of Mines, Energy and Natural Resources.
7.      Ministry of Justice.
8.      Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health.
9.      Ministry of Labour and Social Security.
10.     Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
11.     Ministry of Home Affairs.
12.     Ministry of Foreign Affairs
13.     Ministry of Transport, Communication, Works and Supply.
14.     Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry.
15.     Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs.
16.     Ministry of Education.
17.     Ministry of Youth and Sport
18.     Ministry of Tourism and Culture

However, although permission was granted, actual access to respondents proved to be a challenge. This was due to protocol issues and the fact that civil servants in Zambia are very busy. As discussed in Section 4.3, this resulted in changes to the research strategy such that both the qualitative and quantitative research were administered simultaneously.

## **4.6 Data Collection**

### **4.6.1 Qualitative Data Collection**

Qualitative data was collected from thirteen ministries through two instruments namely semi-structured interviews and documentary review. Semi-structured interviews were based on a pre-determined interview prompt sheet. Respondents were contacted by the researcher, in person, to secure appointments for interviews and were provided with a copy of the letter in which the researcher was granted permission to undertake the study. The researcher also explained the purpose of the research and assured respondents of confidentiality. The interviews were conducted at times and places agreed with and convenient to respondents.

To reduce bias and enhance data accuracy, all interview proceedings were recorded using a voice recorder (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Curry, Nembhard and Bradley, 2009). In each case, the consent of the respondents was sought prior to using the voice recorder. Murphy (2011) and Yusoff (1998) used this approach in their studies. The data from the recorded interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber and the transcripts were verified by the researcher. The verified transcripts were sent to respective respondents for them to confirm whether the transcripts were a true record of their responses. Respondents were given a period of two weeks to respond. They were also provided with the researcher's email address to which they were to send details of any changes. None of the respondents requested for any changes to be made. This provided confirmation of the accuracy of the transcripts and assisted to validate the research (Murphy, 2011).

Documents were used as sources of narratives to validate responses from respondents. Respondents were asked to provide the researcher with relevant documentation such as planning procedures and SPs. In some cases, documents such as SPs were obtained from ministry websites, where the facility was available.

### **4.6.2 Quantitative Data Collection**

Quantitative data was collected from sixteen (16) ministries using self-completion questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed by the researcher. As recommended by Bryman and Bell (2011), the questionnaires were accompanied by a letter explaining the purpose and importance of the research and by a copy of the letter in which the researcher was granted permission to undertake the study. In an effort to enhance the response rate, the researcher also provided verbal explanations of the purpose of the

research at the point of delivering the questionnaire. Further, Individual respondents were given assurance of confidentiality and that they would remain anonymous throughout the study and thereafter. More details on confidentiality are given in Appendix 4, code of ethics.

Respondents were asked to provide a date on which the researcher would collect the completed questionnaires. For respondents who were not ready by the initial indicated date, another date was requested for. A phone call was made a day before the second due date to remind the respondents. This is in line with Bryman and Bell (2011) who argued that sending reminders enhances the response rate. All respondents who had not completed the questionnaire by the second due date were considered non-responsive.

#### **4.7 Data Analysis**

The units of analysis included individual respondents and ministries. Analyses of both qualitative and quantitative data were done by firstly analysing each respondent's responses across related questions, then between responses from respondents within each ministry and thirdly between responses across ministries. Common themes were derived and these were compared against themes from the SP literature.

Considering that the aim of this research was to establish the extent and nature of adoption of SPP and the barriers to its effective implementation and that it was not a hypothesis testing, the analysis of the data did not extend to testing relationships between variables

##### **4.7.1 Qualitative Data Analysis**

Analysis of data from interviews was based on confirmed interview transcripts. As stated earlier, recordings of interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber, verified by the researcher and availed to the respondents for confirmation of accuracy. As recommended by Bryman and Bell (2011), field notes about certain elements were taken during and after each interview. These formed part of the data for analysis.

Analysis of interview transcripts focused on identification of themes which were relevant to the research aim. Respondent answers were placed in a spreadsheet against respective questions. These responses were then content analysed and coded to identify phrases and/or words which were common to each question (see Appendix 44 for an example of a coded interview transcript). These common themes then formed the basis of the findings of the study. Considering the importance of context in SP, deliberate emphasis was made

on taking account of the sense in which phrases and words were used by respondents. In this regard, some elements of narrative analysis are evident in the study.

Documentary review was used as a means of triangulating responses from respondents. For example, in cases where respondents referred to the existence of written planning procedures, these were reviewed to confirm that response and to review how such documents affected the SPP. Further, documentary review was a source of data that could not be obtained through interviews and the questionnaire survey.

Content analysis of responses was carried out at three levels: firstly, analysis of each respondent's responses across related questions, secondly, between responses within each ministry and thirdly, between responses across ministries. Further, the developed themes were reviewed in the light of the available literature on public sector SP.

#### **4.7.2 Quantitative Data Analysis**

Quantitative data was analysed using the latest version of the SPSS which was obtained from the University website. The researcher learnt how to use SPSS from Bryman and Bell's (2011) book. The high volume of data obtained necessitated the use of computer software for analysis. The use of computer software is credited for enhancing speed and efficiency in analysing high volumes of data (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Murphy (2011) used a computerised application for data analysis in her study.

A pre-coded questionnaire was devised and distributed by the researcher (see Appendix 2) for a copy of the coded questionnaire). The coding was reviewed by a local academic expert and by the researcher's supervisor. Responses were then inputted into the SPSS and selected descriptive statistics and charts generated.

Frequency tables, measures of central tendency and dispersion were some of the tools that were used to analyse the data. Pie charts and customised tables were also used. Data in Tables 6.10 to 6.16 and 6.20 to 6.27 were based on 7 point Likert scale questions which were treated as interval scales. As such, means were calculated for these data. In line with this, Bryman and Bell (2011) stated that it is not unusual for such statistics to be used on this type of data. There is, however, controversy regarding whether Likert scales are interval data (Jamieson, 2004; Knapp, 1990).

Similar to phase one, analysis was carried out at three levels, firstly, analysis of each respondent's responses across related questions, secondly, between responses within each ministry and thirdly, between responses across ministries.

#### **4.7.3 Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis**

In line with the recommendation by Bryman and Bell (2011) that findings of mixed methods research should be integrated and not interpreted separately, results from the qualitative research were compared against those from the quantitative research. This was done for each respondent, in the case of those who took part in both phases, and then for each ministry. Murphy (2011) and Yusoff (1998) successfully used this approach

#### **4.8 Reliability, Validity and Transferability**

The extent of reliance readers place on the results of any research project depends, to a greater degree, on the accuracy of data collection and analysis which in turn depends on the reliability and validity of the methodology used. Therefore, reliability and validity are vital elements of any research project (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Murphy, 2011). Considering the foregoing, various measures were put in place to achieve reliability and validity for this research. These included the following:

- Application of the study on sixteen government ministries and the inclusion of multiple respondents from each ministry.
- Use of mixed methods research incorporating the use of interviews, documentary review and questionnaires.
- Basing the design and development of both the interview prompt sheet and the questionnaire on a detailed review of the literature and use of plain simple language.
- Subjecting both the interview prompt sheet and the questionnaire to review by several people, i.e. a local academician, local SP practitioners and the supervisor.
- Pilot testing of all three instruments prior to application on the main study.
- Voice recording interviews and transcribing the recordings using a professional transcriber. Further, by the researcher conducting a thorough review of the transcripts comparing them to actual recordings.
- Providing copies of transcripts to respondents for confirmation of accuracy prior to analysis.

The detailed description of the methodology provided in the preceding sections enhances its transferability to other studies. However, it should be noted that



replication/transferability of qualitative research is said to be challenge (Bryman and Bell, 2011)

#### **4.9 Research Ethics**

Ethical considerations are important in carrying out research. The researcher, therefore, took account of ethical considerations at all stages of the research.

In seeking access to ministries, the researcher was honest with information on levels of input that were to be required from them and with details of the benefits to be derived from the research. Questions were designed with uttermost clarity with no hidden meanings and participants were encouraged to ask for clarification where they found some questions to be unclear.

During the research, adequate and due preparations were made by the researcher prior to meeting respondents. Respondents were treated with due respect and care and were given the freedom to choose whether or not to answer any question and whether to be recorded or not. Data obtained was handled with confidentiality and respondents were kept anonymous, ensuring their responses could not be traced back to them. This was achieved by the use of alphabetical letters to disguise participants. A confidentiality agreement was signed with the professional transcriber who was engaged to transcribe recorded interviews.

The researcher carefully and thoroughly reviewed the transcripts against the actual recordings to ensure that they were accurately transcribed. Further, copies of the transcripts were sent to respondents for confirmation of accuracy prior to final analysis. A deadline was provided within which respondents who disagreed with the transcripts were to get back to the researcher. Research conclusions were only derived from data validly obtained. No data was excluded based on being contradictory.

Consideration of the relevant Zambian legislation was also made, particularly in terms of data protection.

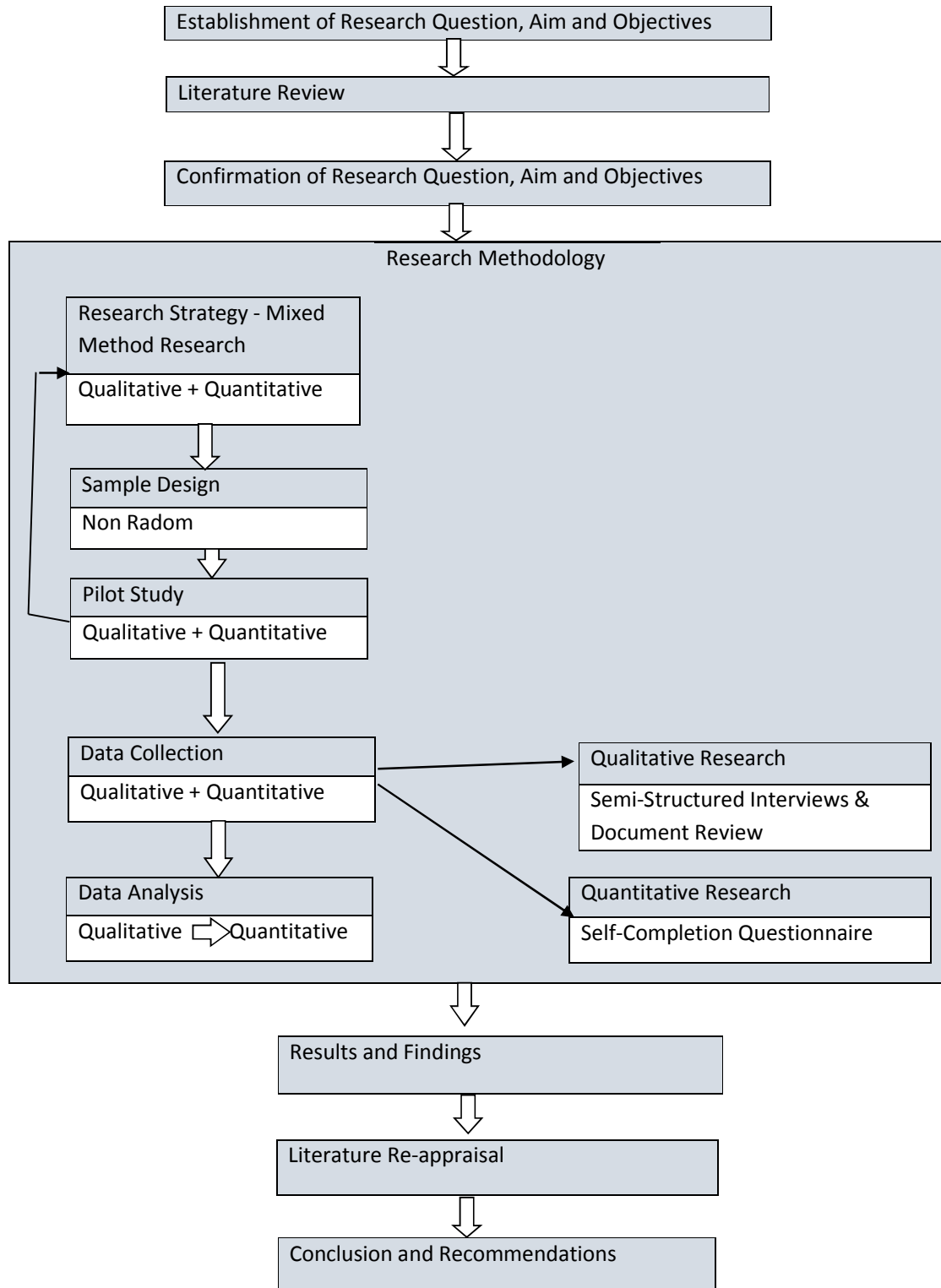
Further, other than services of the professional transcriber, the research was the researcher's own work in every sense, as required by the EBS DBA research rules.

The above ethical considerations are in line with the requirements of the EBS DBA research rules and the researcher was bound by the Universities ethical code of conduct. The code of ethics which was applied is attached at Appendix 4.

#### 4.10 Limitations of the Methodology

The limitations of the methodology have been fully recognised in Chapter 7, Section 7.4.

**Figure 4.1 Summary of Research Process**



#### **4.11 Summary**

The preceding sections have provided a detailed account of the research method which was used in this study.

This study was conducted using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The data collection instruments used included: semi-structured interviews, documentary review and self-completion questionnaires. These were all tested through a pilot study. The data was collected from sixteen government ministries in Zambia. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents from each ministry. A summary of the research process is given in Figure 4.1 above.

The chapter that follows provides a detailed account of the results and findings of the pilot study.

## **CHAPTER 5                      PILOT STUDY RESULTS**

### **5.1      Introduction**

Pilot studies are important tools for testing research instruments. The absence of research on SP in the Zambian public sector specifically necessitated the carrying out of a pilot study in the current research.

However, challenges with access to respondents (as described in the chapter above) meant that the Pilot study could only test out the questionnaire and modus operandi of the interviews. Due to the fact that civil servants in Zambia are very busy and protocol only allowed one interview and questionnaire occasion, it was only feasible for the researcher to access each respondent from each ministry once. Consequently, trying to interview personnel for different purposes on different occasions was neither feasible nor allowed. For this reason, and as discussed in Section 4.4.1, the pilot study respondents were not the same persons as those who were going to be involved in the main study, but rather were experts, working in the public sector, who could advise appropriately. To this end, the pilot study aimed to address the following objectives:

- To test the appropriateness of the data collection instruments.
- To test the appropriateness and clarity of the questions in the interview prompt sheet and self-completion questionnaire.
- To test the appropriateness of the targeted respondents.
- To test the comprehensiveness of the issues covered.

The pilot study followed the structure of the main study as provided in the initial research strategy. It was undertaken in two phases over a period of two weeks. As will be seen later, phase one tested the interview prompt sheet and documentary review while phase two tested the self-completion questionnaire. The research instruments were first tested in the researcher's organisation prior to being tested in one purposely selected government ministry.

The researcher's organisation is a public sector organisation although it is not a ministry. Officers at middle management level with involvement in SP were requested to take part in the pilot testing of the interview prompt sheet and the questionnaire. Very useful insights were developed from the researcher's organisation.

## **5.2 Semi-Structured Interview and Documentary Review Pilot Study**

Four semi-structured interviews were conducted, three with respondents from the researcher's organisation and one from the purposely selected ministry. The three participants from the researcher's organisation were engaged in their personal capacity as workmates and practitioners while the one from the ministry was recommended by that ministry's head of planning. Of the four interviews, only the one from the ministry was voice recorded.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to each participant and indicated that this was a pilot study. The objectives of the pilot study were outlined and participants were encouraged to critically review the interview and to give feedback afterwards.

Questions asked in the pilot interviews were based on the proposal for the main study as indicated in Section 4.3.1 above. The interview questions were grouped in five main groups namely: personal information, ministry information, SPP characteristics, barriers to SP and any other issues.

The findings from the pilot study for phase one and the resulting changes to the interview prompt sheet are provided below.

### **5.2.1 Semi-Structured Interview Pilot Study Findings and Resulting Amendments**

The findings from the phase one pilot study provided valuable contributions for the main study. These included the following:

- That the SPPs in the Zambian public sector were formal and largely comprehensive in terms of depth and breadth of information analysis, strategy generation and analysis and scope.
- That there was wide stakeholder participation of both internal and external stakeholders at all stages of the SPP.
- That planning functions played a critical role in driving the SPP.
- That there was limited application of strategy tools and that the use of such tools was based on individual staff creativity.
- That the key challenges to implementation of SP in the Zambian public sector included: bureaucracy, time taken to prepare SPs, limited resources, inadequate integration of staff performance appraisal systems with SPs, inadequate enforcement mechanism and inappropriate work culture. The introduction of

bureaucracy and time taken to prepare SPs as barriers resulted in a change to the self-completion questionnaire.

- The need to add a question to address the extent to which annual plans are aligned with SPs. Annual plans were considered to be among the vital tools for successful implementation of SP.

Further to the findings above, feedback from respondents was that the interview was too long. The researcher also noticed that respondents lost concentration after about twenty minutes of the interview and during that time, the interview was still dealing with questions on general ministry information. In view of this, the researcher reduced the number of questions by making the following amendments;

- Question numbers 4, 5 and 12 were removed. The information that these questions should have generated was obtained through documentary review.
- Procurement processes were removed from question 17.
- Question number 26 was amended to only refer to internal and external stakeholders without breaking down internal stakeholders into management/staff levels. The break down to these levels was handled through the questionnaire survey.
- The order of questions was adjusted such that those on SPP characteristics were asked before questions on general ministry information.

The phase one pilot study also provided the researcher with an opportunity to practice his interviewing skills. Particularly, it helped the researcher to appreciate the need to listen more, to give respondents enough time to respond and to provide direction for the interview. Achieving a balance between the need to allow the respondent to speak and to keep the interview under control was quite a challenge.

### **5.3 Self-Completion Questionnaire Pilot Study**

The self-completion questionnaire was tested on eleven participants, four of whom were from the researcher's organisation and six from the purposely selected ministry which was used in the phase one pilot study although only five were received back resulting in a response rate of 83%.

Of the four respondents from the researcher's organisation, three took part in the pilot study for phase one. Again, these were engaged in their personal capacity as workmates and practitioners. The six participants from the purposely-selected ministry were nominated by

the ministry's head of planning. Table 5.1 below provides a summary of the distribution of respondents from the ministry.

**Table 5.1      Distribution of Pilot Study Respondents from the Ministry**

<b>Department/ Unit</b>	<b>No of Participates Engaged</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>
Core Business	2	1
Information Technology	1	1
Procurement	1	1
Human Resource	1	1
Accounts	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>

Like the phase one pilot study, the questions included in the questionnaire were based on the proposal for the main study as discussed in Section 4.3.1. The questionnaire was distributed by the researcher. The researcher explained the purpose of the research to each respondent and indicated that this was a pilot study. Respondents were encouraged to critically assess the questionnaire and were provided with a pilot study feedback form (see Appendix 3). Respondents were requested to indicate the date on which the questionnaires would be ready for collection.

Feedback received indicated the following:

- The need to remove the requirement for respondents to include their names.
- That the questionnaire was too long.
- The need to reword some questions.
- The need to provide definitions for some terminology used.
- That the questionnaire was too technical for participates from other departments other than the planning department in ministries where there was limited participation in the SPP.
- That question "17" was not clear as it was mistaken to ask about the planning horizon.

Based on this feedback, the following are some of the changes that were made to the questionnaire:

- The provision for respondents to include their names was removed and replaced with a provision for them to indicate their department.
- To reduce the length of the questionnaire, two full questions were removed. The first question requested respondents to indicate, from a list of industries, the industries they serviced. It was decided that this information would be obtained through the interview. The second question which was removed requested respondents to indicate the extent to which their ministry developed forecast for 16 environmental factors. The question testing the extent to which these factors were monitored was retained.
- Some of the questions were reworded as follows:

#### **Question 5**

Initial wording, *“Please indicate the number of years you have been working in this ministry”*

Changed to, *“How many years have you worked in this ministry?”*

#### **Question 6**

Initial wording, *“Please indicate the number of years you have worked in the public sector”*

Changed to, *“How many years have you worked in the public sector?”*

#### **Question 7**

Initial wording, *“Please indicate the number of years you have been involved in strategic planning for your ministry.”*

Changed to, *“How many years have you been involved in strategic planning for this ministry?”*

#### **Question 26**

The word *“poor”* in reference to barriers such as poor leadership, poor organisation culture, poor enforcement mechanisms, etc. was replaced by words, *“inadequate”* and *“inappropriate”*.



- Definitions for the words “*complexity*” and “*stability*” for question “10” were added.
- To address the concern of the questionnaire being too technical, some flexibility on the selection of target respondents was provided for. For ministries with limited participation of officers from departments other than planning in the SPP, a decision was made to give the questionnaire to officers from Planning. This ensured the provision of informed contributions by respondents.
- A new question was introduced to ask about the ministry’s planning horizon prior to asking about scheduled planning reviews. This resulted in a change in question numbers such that question “17” now became question “18”

As discussed earlier, the researcher found that employees in the Zambian public sector were very busy. This was demonstrated in the challenges he faced in collecting data for the pilot study. This experience gave him a feel of the challenges he was to expect in the main study. As a result, a decision was made to alter the initial research strategy from using a phased approach to administering both the qualitative and quantitative methods simultaneously. The revised strategy is what is described in the research strategy section above. This was considered an appropriate strategy considering that both the interview prompt sheet and the questionnaire were both thoroughly reviewed prior to the pilot study and during the pilot study. See Appendix 1 and 2 for the final interview prompt sheet and questionnaire respectively

The pilot study provided useful contribution towards the successful collection of data for the main study. Following the completion of the pilot study, the amended instruments were applied to the main study.

The next chapter provides details of the qualitative and quantitative research findings

**6.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the findings of this study. This study was based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative research involved the use of semi-structured interviews and documentary review while the quantitative research involved the use of a self-completion questionnaire.

Evidence suggests an improvement in the nature and extent of adoption of SPPs in the Zambian public sector. SPPs in ministries are increasingly more comprehensive, deliberative and consultative. However, a number of weaknesses were observed with the implementation and monitoring and review processes. Evidence suggests that more attention was paid to the SP formulation stage while implementation and monitoring and review did not receive adequate attention. The other weaknesses included: the weak integration of SPPs with other organisational processes, inadequate inter-ministerial harmonisation and inadequate participation of operational staff and external stakeholders. A number of barriers were also evident from the data.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections namely: findings from the qualitative research, findings from the quantitative research, comparative analysis of qualitative and quantitative findings and conclusion.

**6.2 Findings from the Qualitative Research****6.2.1 Overview**

The qualitative research was based on the use of semi-structured interviews and documentary review. Prior to conducting the interviews, authority was obtained from each participating ministry's management. Nominations of officers to be interviewed were also obtained from each ministry. Permission was sought from each respondent to voice record the interviews.

Targeted respondents included officers with deep understanding of each ministry's SPP, preferably someone from a planning function. The targeted sample comprised one officer from each of the twenty (20) government ministries in Zambia. However, only thirteen (13) ministries and fourteen (14) respondents were involved. This was because some ministries were not available for the study. Details of the access challenges faced are discussed in Section 5.1.

This translates to response rates of 65% for ministries and 70% for respondents. In one of the ministries two respondents opted to take part in the interview. As such one of the interviews was conducted with two respondents. All interviews were voice recorded and transcribed by a professional transcriber.

The qualitative research provided valuable insight regarding the characteristics of the participating ministries, respondents and ministry SPPs and barriers to SP.

## **6.2.2 General Ministry Information**

### **6.2.2.3 Adoption of Strategic Planning**

All the respondents from the thirteen (13) ministries indicated that their ministries had adopted SP although at the time of the study, 25% indicated that they did not have SPs. This was confirmed by a review of SPs. The ministries that did not have SPs indicated that they were in the process of developing them. This is in line with theme E in Section 2.2.9 which established that all ministries were mandated to implement SP. However, the driving forces for the adoption of SP varied between ministries. These included the following:

- The need for guidance and coordination of ministry programmes and activities.

This was the most stated driving force with 62% of the ministries having made reference to it. It was felt that SP provided ministries with a means of guiding and coordinating their programmes and activities:

**(Ministry E)** *“We recognised the fact that in the absence of some kind of structured framework that will guide us to do what we ought to do, everyone would be doing what they feel like doing. So, we adopted the strategic planning process to guide us on what we must do, when it must be done, hopefully how it must be done, with whom it must be done and why it must be done.”*

- The need to implement ministry mandate.

This was the second most referred to driving force with 38% of the ministries referring to it. Ministries felt that SP enhanced their ability to implement their mandates:

**(Ministry E)** *“So, the main reason was the need to ensure that we implement our mandate”.*

- The need to have a long term focus.

23% of the ministries recognised the need to have a long term perspective and that SP provided a means to achieve this:

**(Ministry H)** *“So, we needed to identify with that corporate goal and long term perspective and came up with the strategic plan to help us actualise that”*

- The need to raise resources.

SP was seen as a means of raising funds both from the national treasury and cooperating partners for the implementation of ministry mandates.

**(Ministry G)** *“Because now Ministry of Finance does not just release funding just like that, you have to show your progress in implementing those projects in line with the strategic plan. .... So this really made us commerce the process of drafting the strategic plan because it is that strategic plan which will make us justify the need for more funding.”*

Interestingly, one of the respondents was of the view that ministries that received more donor support were more advanced in the nature and extent of use of SPPs than some of those that did not have as much donor support. This is because of what he referred to as the “silent role of donors” in that donors demanded and supported the development of SPs as a pre-condition to releasing funding:

**(Ministry J)** *“Of course, in those other ministries there is a very silent role that donors play and that silent role is making those ministries move to a certain level. .... So, when the process is being delayed by the bureaucracy of the system, donors would pump in money so that it moves....saying they will only release money when this document is done ...”*

In view of the foregoing, one would expect ministries to be more committed to SP if the Ministry of Finance made full implementation of SPPs a precondition for release of funds.

- The need to be systematic

15% of ministries indicated that SP provided a means for being systematic in implementing ministry programmes and activities:

**(Ministry L)** *“I think it’s just to try and have a coherent way of implementing things”*

- The need to priorities activities and resources.

The need to prioritise arose from the fact that ministries like many other organisations faced resource scarcity and, therefore, needed tools that would enable them to utilize these limited resources most efficiently in execution of their mandates.

- Compliance with government directives.

Whereas one would have expected compliance with government directives to have been cited by all the ministries, only 23% indicated it to be their driving force for adopting SP. This is suggestive of the fact that the current enforcement mechanism used, i.e. the use of a circular, by the government requires strengthening.

The forces indicated above fall in two broad categories namely: the need for strategic and proactive management and compliance with government directives. The first six (6) fall in the first category and the last one in the second category. These findings are in line with findings in other countries that the main driving force for the adoption of SP in the public sector is the need for strategic and proactive management (e.g. Bryson, 2011; Poister, 2010; Hendrick, 2003) as established in Section 2.4.2.

These findings provide an addition to the literature considering that prior to this study, no study existed that documented the driving forces for the adoption of SP in Zambia. Knowledge of these driving forces can be useful in assisting the Zambian public sector in finding ways to enhance the use of SP.

#### **6.2.2.4 Qualifications of Ministry Employees**

One of the objectives of the public sector reforms in Zambia was to improve the quality of public service employees in terms of qualifications. This was in an effort to improve the quality of public service delivery (Management Development Division, 2001). Evidence suggests that these efforts have paid off in that all respondents were of the view that the levels of qualification of employees in their ministries had improved and that these were adequate except in cases where treasury authority had not been granted to recruit staff with competencies recommended in SPs:

**(Ministry F)** *“The qualifications are very adequate. Each position has entry requirements and I think we cannot compromise on those. .... I believe that the members of staff in the ministry are competent and well qualified based on their educational qualifications.”*

With this improvement in employee qualifications, it is reasonable to expect to see an improvement in the quality of SP in ministries. Details of the progression of SP in ministries are discussed in Section 6.2.6

#### **6.2.2.5 Ministry Decision Making Process**

The more decentralised a decision making process is, the greater the need for a guiding and coordinating framework such as a SP. This substitutes for the central control that exists in centralized systems. In the absence of such a framework, decisions that are made may not be consistent across the organisation.

The Zambian government is working towards achieving more decentralisation of operations and decision making processes in the public sector. This, therefore, entails an increase in the need for SP in the Zambian public sector. In view of this, respondents were asked to indicate the type of decision making processes adopted by their ministries.

Most of the ministries indicated that their ministries had adopted a hybrid approach which incorporated both top down and bottom up approaches with policy decisions being based on the former and operational ones on the later. Two ministries, however, indicated that they are still using predominately centralized processes but that they are in the process of moving towards the hybrid approach:

**(Ministry G)** *“We are currently operating under a centralised system. Except we are in the process of submitting sector devolution plans. .... So we expect to see a hybrid of decentralised and centralised processes”.*

#### **6.2.2.6 Public Sector Environment**

Organisational environment affects SPP characteristics (Murphy, 2011; Haug, 1997). In light of this, this study sought to understand the environments ministries operate in.

In line with key theme C in Section 2.2.9, evidence suggests that there was an increase environmental dynamism and complexity. Respondents indicated that their environments were becoming increasingly unstable and complex. Some of the cited sources of instability were the frequency of ministry realignments and the fluctuations in the value of the Zambian Kwacha and in copper prices. Complexity was seen as resulting from the existence of a large number of partners and things that ministries dealt with and from an increase in the complexity of issues affecting service consumers:

**(Ministry L)** *“For me it’s not stable. The frequent realignment of ministries just confuses the thinking and processes of implementation. Looking at complexity, yes it is. It goes back to the number of partners that you have, multiple partners.... But it is also complicated in the sense that you look at the number of things that you have to do...”* (Paraphrased).

**(Ministry B)** *“It becomes complex because the issues that are affecting our clients are becoming complex each day...Coming to stability, we would not be in a stable state when the macroeconomic picture itself is not so stable....”*

Another aspect of the environment was the interdependency of ministry mandates and in some cases overlapping mandates between ministries.

**(Ministry K)** *“.....we are supposed to work with the Ministries of Education, Community Development or Health. So, we have well defined roles which help us implement some of the programmes.... So, the overlap in terms of mandates is one of the major challenges that we have experienced.”*

This entails a need for closer collaboration between ministries to avoid implementation of conflicting programmes. The issue of harmonisation of SPPs is discussed latter in Section 6.2.4.1.

The increasing environmental dynamism and complexity, as established above, testifies to the importance of SP to the Zambian Public sector.

#### **6.2.2.7 Planning Function Structure**

Ministries were grouped in three categories based on the structure of their planning functions. 70% had planning departments, 15% planning units and 15% adhoc planning committees. This combination of ministries enable the researcher to develop insight into the SPPs of ministries in each category.

#### **6.2.3 Respondent Information**

The primary criteria for the targeted respondents for the qualitative research was possession of in-depth understanding of the SPPs adopted by their ministries. It was, therefore, expected that officers from planning functions were better placed to have the required level of understanding and so were the targeted interview respondents.

##### **6.2.3.1 Respondent Experience in Public Sector Strategic Planning in Zambia**

It was critical that respondents had adequate experience in SP in the public sector in general and more importantly in their current ministry. It was assumed that the longer one's experience in SP in the public sector and in their current ministry was, the more understanding of the SPP they had.

In this vein, Table 6.1 shows that 64% of respondents had worked in their current ministry for less than 6 years, while 36% for more than five (5) years. Of the 64% who had worked in their current ministry for less than six (6) years, 89% had worked in another ministry before. This confirms the existence of staff rotations between government ministries of which some interview respondents expressed concern that at times they were done in a way that presented a barrier to SP.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, it was evident that the majority of respondents had worked in the public sector and in their current ministries long enough to have the required level of understanding of the public sector to enable them provide knowledgeable contributions to the study. However, one notable exception existed for Ministry I where the respondent had been in the public sector for only eight (8) months.

In terms of involvement in SP in their current ministries, Table 6.2 shows that all respondents had been involved in SP for their current ministries although the majority, 71%, had been involved for a shorter period of less than six (6) years. 29% were involved for more than five (5) years. Although the majority of respondents had few years of



involvement in SP in their current ministries, most of them, as indicated earlier, had been involved in SP in other ministries

**Table 6.1 Respondents by Years Worked in Current Ministry**

Years	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0-5	9	64	64	64
6-10	3	22	22	86
11-15	2	14	14	100
Total	14	100	100	

Considering that the SPPs in ministries are not very different, as was indicated by one respondent, “...*But I don’t think that the planning process is so different...*” (Ministry D), these respondents were still considered to have adequate understanding of public sector SP for them to give knowledgeable responses. In fact, it was expected that their involvement in SP in more than one ministry enabled them to have broader understanding hence enabling them to give more informed responses.

**Table 6.2 Respondents by Years of Involvement in Strategic Planning in Current Ministry**

Years	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0-5	10	71	71	71
6-10	3	22	22	93
11-15	1	7	7	100
Total	14	100	100	

### **6.2.3.2 Respondents by Ministry Planning Function Structure**

The respondents achieved were representative of all three categories of ministries in terms of the structure of planning functions. 64% were from ministries that had a planning department, 22% from those that had a planning unit and 14% from those that had adhoc planning committees (see Table 6.3 and Figure 6.1)

### **6.2.3.3 Respondents Departments**

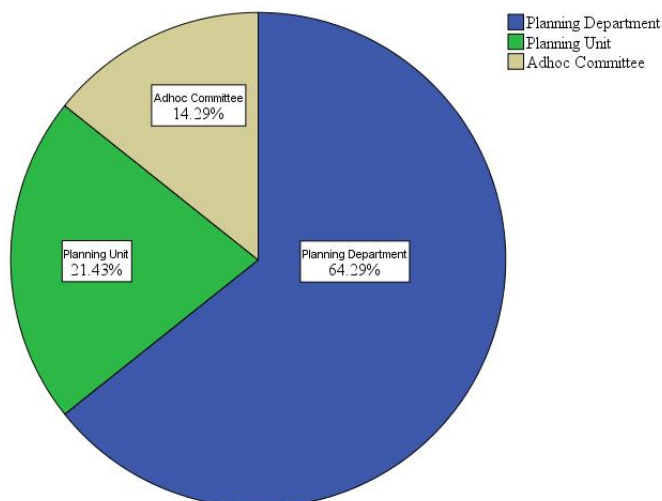
As can be seen from Table 6.4 and Figure 6.2, respondents achieved satisfied the primary criteria. The majority, 79%, were from planning functions and had adequate experience in the public sector to enable them have the required level of understanding of SPPs adopted

by their ministries. Those that were from departments other than planning were from ministries that had adhoc planning committees. 14% were from Ministry Core Business while 7% from Human Resource departments. These too had adequate understanding of the SPPs of their ministries considering that they were the leading coordinators of their committees

**Table 6.3 Respondent by Ministry Planning Function Structure**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Planning Department	9	64	64	64
Planning Unit	3	22	22	86
Adhoc Committee	2	14	14	100
Total	14	100	100	

**Figure 6.1 Respondents by Ministry Planning Function Structure**

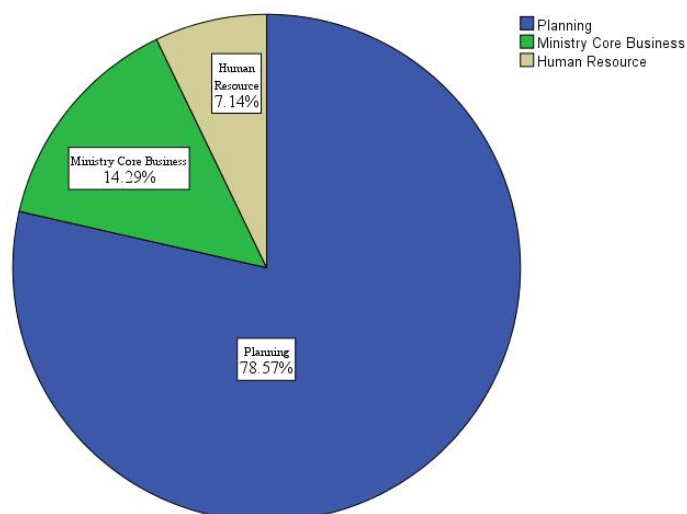


#### 6.2.3.4 Respondent Positions

The majority (86%) of respondents were middle management while 14% were top management (see Table 6.5 and Figure 6.3). Operational staff were not represented. As much as it was desirable to have more top management respondents, middle management respondents also had adequate understanding the SPPs in their ministries. The lack of representation of operational staff was as expected as top and middle managers are likely to have more understanding of SP than operational staff.

**Table 6.4 Respondents by Department**

Department	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Planning	11	79	79	79
Ministry Core Business	2	14	14	93
Human Resource	1	7	7	100
Total	14	100	100	

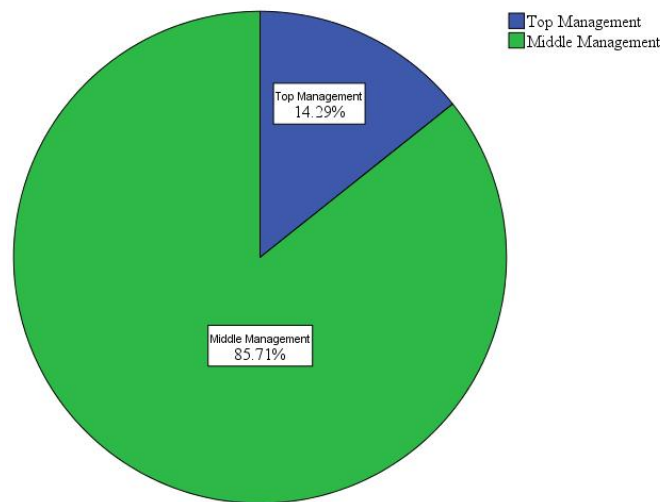
**Figure 6.2 Respondents by Department****Table 6.5 Respondents by Position Held in Ministry Organisational Structure.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Top Management	2	14	14	14
Middle Management	12	86	86	100
Total	14	100	100	

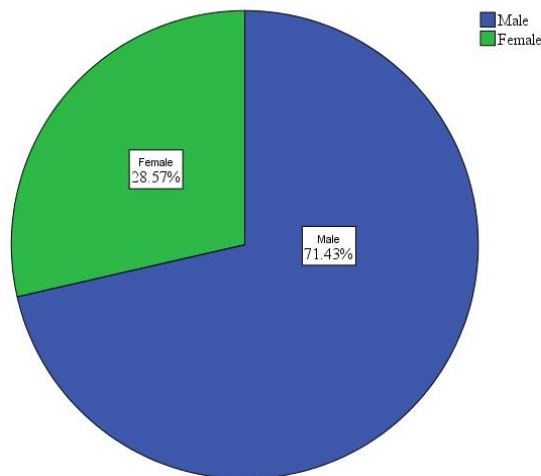
**6.2.3.5 Respondents by Gender**

In terms of gender representation, both males and females were represented with 71.4% being male and 28.6% being female (see Figure 6.4).

**Figure 6.3 Respondents by Position Held in Ministry Organisation Structure**



**Figure 6.4 Respondents by Gender**



## **6.2.4 Strategic Planning Process Characteristics**

### **6.2.4.1 Comprehensiveness**

As established in Section 2.3.5.1, comprehensiveness refers to the extent to which SPPs are exhaustive and inclusive in making and integrating strategic decisions (Fredrickson, 1984). The literature review in Section 2.4.3.1 established the importance of comprehensiveness to SP in the public sector and that public sector organisations are increasingly adopting more comprehensive SPPs (e.g. Sulle, 2009; Poister and Streib, 2005; Jerome and Jacobs, 1987) as a means of managing in the light of increasingly dynamic environments. As a result, this research aimed at establishing the comprehensiveness of SPPs in the Zambian public sector.

### **Depth and Breadth of Information Analysis**

Comprehensiveness of SPPs in terms of the extent to which public sector organisations are exhaustive and inclusive in identifying and analysing their environments and alternative strategies is critical in achieving strategic fit. In this regard, questions asked sought to establish: (1) environmental areas monitored, (2) comprehensiveness of identification and analysis of alternative strategies and (3) exhaustiveness of sources of information.

Like public sector organisations in other countries, evidence suggests an increase in the comprehensiveness of information analysis in ministry SPPs in Zambia. In terms of monitoring of the environment, the areas mentioned by respondents were exhaustive:

**(Ministry E)** *“However, the list is endless depending on how we would have performed over a period of time. So, if there are certain challenges that we faced and were not related to what I mentioned, but affected our performance, we analyse those as well”*

However, it is also evident that there existed variations between ministries in the extent to which they were comprehensive with some being more comprehensive than others.

#### **Internal Environment**

Some of the internal areas that were monitored included: human resources, organisational structure, infrastructure, operating systems, leadership, work culture and ministry policies.

Human resources emerged to be the most monitored internal area. It was established that human resources were key to the implementation of SPs:

**(Ministry L)** *“Firstly, the staffing levels because they play a critical role in the way we execute the strategic plan.”*

More specifically, the aspects of human resources monitored included: staff numbers, qualifications, competencies and staff input and output:

**(Ministry H)** *“....in terms of the internal environment, we look at the input of workers, how they are working, and the output of various departments because we have to carry out the performance audit.”*

Closely linked to human resources was organisational structure.

**(Ministry L)** *“.... when we are looking at the human resources we try as much as possible to relate it to the structure. ....sometimes we have a situation where the proposed structure is not filled.”*

Ministries are biased towards the rational approach in that they ascribe to the thought of structure following strategy. It is critical that an appropriate structure is in place to support the implementation of a SP:

**(Ministry L)** *“But we try as much as possible even before we start considering how we are going to implement this. Firstly we look at which departments will implement what, what structure is in that department and has that structure been filled.”*

Infrastructure and tools are essential in providing ministries with means for implementing their SPs and were therefore monitored:

**(Ministry K)** *“We also have inadequate office accommodation, furniture as well as transport. ... so, we still lack office space and that is one of the hindrances that we have had.”*

The role of leadership in ensuring the successful implementation of SP was noted by a number of respondents:

**(Ministry L)** *“We also look at supervisory roles in the sense that everybody who is undertaking some activity needs to be supervised to ensure that they are doing what they are supposed to be doing.”*

#### External Environment

Some of the areas of the external environment which ministries monitored included: political factors, economic factors, external stakeholders, inter-ministerial coordination, financial resources, technological developments, public perceptions, ministry mandate and national policies and programmes.

Political and economic factors emerged as the most monitored areas with 46% of ministries indicating that they monitored them. Both political and economic factors were considered to be critical to the successful implementation of SP:

**(Ministry A)** *“Broadly speaking, there should be political and economic stability for the ministry to deliver....Like next year, they are talking of an expansionary fiscal policy being difficult because of the challenges the country is facing economically.....”*

**(Ministry C)** *“One of them is the political aspect which has an influence on how we conduct our business and we cannot run away from it.”*

Stakeholder expectations and relations are important aspects of public sector management. In this regard, 38% of ministries indicated that they monitored these aspects:

**(Respondent E)** *“We look at stakeholders, who are our clients, and who we are principally there to serve. These are the broader people that are impacted by the policies and programmes that we implement.”*

Technology provides an important means for efficient provision of goods and services. 23% of ministries showed appreciation of the role that technology plays in the provision of services and as such monitored technological advancements as part of their SPPs:

**(Respondent D)** *“And of course technological advances. .... There has been massive advancements in technology such that what used to be independent, separate and clearly identified ways of processing data and information now it’s all one. Everything has merged.....So all that advancement in technology is a critical factor.”*

Interestingly, funding was seen as an external factor due to the fact that ministries depended on external parties for their funding. Funding is a very critical factor without which it would be impossible to implement SPs. 23% of respondents indicated monitoring of this area:

**(Ministry L)** *“.... we look at the financing aspect because the ministry does not fund its own activities.... even if we have the people with the right competencies, we may not be able to undertake some activities in time and expertly because we have to wait for an external body to finance these activities.”*

As indicated in Section 6.3.3, ministry mandates are highly inter-related thus making critical the need for inter-ministerial coordination although only 23% of ministries indicated that they monitored this area:

**(Ministry E)** *“We also deal with inter-ministerial co-ordination .... So, we also look at issues relating to co-ordination because these are factors that obviously affect our performance in terms of implementing our strategy.”*

Climate change, legal factors, public perceptions, social conditions and international trends are all important areas of ministry external environments. However only 15% of ministries indicated that they monitor these areas.

Overall, only a very small proportion of ministries indicated that they monitored most of the external environmental areas. Only one (1) ministry indicated monitoring nine (9) areas of the external environment with the rest of them indicating monitoring less than six (6) areas. It could either be that respondents only mentioned some of the areas they monitored or that the areas they mentioned are actually the only ones they monitor. In the case of the later, it is recommended that the extent to which ministries monitor the external environment be enhanced. Evidence also suggests that the SPPs in ministries focused more on the internal environment compared to the external:

*“I feel that government now should be more client focused than internal system focused which is the system which we are using now. You go through what are your strengths, weaknesses, the opportunities and your threats are.”*  
(Paraphrased)

#### Alternatives Identification and Analysis

Evidence suggests that ministries endeavoured to be comprehensive in their identification and analysis of alternative strategies for inclusion in their SPs. Numerous strategies were



identified and analysed prior to the selection of those to include in SPs. This was achieved through wider consultation with stakeholders:

**(Ministry B)** *“So, we try to come up with one goal which will embrace our mandate. From that goal, we come up with different objectives and it is from those objectives that we now start to think of how we will actualise ourselves in terms of making sure that we contribute to the attainment of the goal. So, at that point, we start breaking down the functions into strategies. Sometimes, we just brainstorm and a lot of them come up.”*

#### Sources of Information

A vast range of sources of information is available for organisations to tap from in their SPPs. Information is a means through which organisations develop understanding of their environment. The more sources of information an organisation has the more information it is likely to have. In this vein, this research aimed to establish the sources of information used by ministries in Zambia.

Evidence suggests that ministries in Zambia varied in the range of sources of information they used with some ministries using more sources than others. For example, one ministry indicated use of five sources of information, another one indicate use of four sources, four indicated use of three sources and another four indicated use of two sources.

Some of the sources used included: internal information management systems and policies, other government agencies, consultations with stakeholders, government publication and policy documents, surveys, Central Statistics Office, the media, internet, international organisations and public hearings:

**(Respondent E)** *“Internally, we have systems that enable us monitor the implementation of programmes ...”*

**(Respondent H)** *“However, not only do we use questionnaires, but we equally engage key stakeholders one on one so that they can give us feedback on how we are performing as a ministry, which is very important ... Then, there is what we call the..... Sector Advisory Group. This is a grouping of civil society organisations (CSOs) as well as Government departments including co-operating partners. We meet on a quarterly basis where we exchange ideas.”*

(Paraphrased)

**(Respondent E)** *“We interface a lot with the Central Statistics Office which gives us information on how industries perform...”*

The most commonly stated sources of information were: internal information management systems and policies, consultation with stakeholders, other government agencies, government publications and surveys. Surprisingly, the Central Statistics Office was only mentioned by two ministries. This is despite the fact that it is government’s main source of information. It could, however, be that other ministries included it among other government agencies. The internet was only mentioned by one ministry implying that it is rarely used.

These findings have implications for both public managers and stakeholders who wish to have their information reach ministries. For public managers in ministries, it is essential that they consider utilising more sources of information. For stakeholders, these findings enlighten them on whether they are placing their information in places where ministries are looking and thus should be able to decide whether to change those places or to invest more in marketing them for public managers to know about them.

### **Strategic Planning Scope**

A SP should be as encompassing as possible in terms of the areas it covers. Evidence suggests that the scope of ministry SPs is determined by their mandates and that for most ministries was broad both in terms of stakeholder participation and coverage of mandates:

**(Ministry E)** *“We appreciate and have a good understanding of our mandate. Stemming from that, we endeavour to ensure that every aspect of it is covered.... So, I would say that our current strategic plan is exhaustive to the extent that it includes our mandate.”*

The comprehensiveness of planning scope was achieved mainly through the use of consultative processes. However, some ministries felt that the scope of their SPs left out some areas as such was not very encompassing:

**(Ministry C)** *“In this ministry, there are a lot of things that are being done away from the strategic plan. This means that, maybe, the consultative process did not adequately address all the issues or, maybe, the level of involvement from the initial stages of the process could have been questionable”.*

## Process Integration

Critical to the successful implementation of SP is the integration of the SPP with other organisational processes some of which include budgeting, human resource recruitment, staff performance appraisals and annual planning. These processes provide mechanisms for the implementation of SPs. All the ministries recognised the importance of the need to align SPPs with other organisation processes and some ministries endeavoured to ensure that this alignment was achieved:

**(Ministry E)** *“As a matter of fact, we endeavour that they are aligned.”*

However, for most ministries this emerged to be a serious challenge more so when it related to implementation. Efforts were made to align SPs with budgets, organisational structures and annual plans but execution of these presented a major challenge:

**(Ministry D)** *“That (alignment) has been the biggest challenge in probably the whole government system”*

**(Ministry E)** *“As a matter of fact, we endeavour that they are aligned. The issue of whether or not that is implemented is one challenge that I highlighted earlier on because there are other factors that affect its implementation.”*

In terms of budgeting and annual planning, most ministries endeavoured to ensure alignment at the preparation stage but faced serious challenges with execution:

**(Ministry D)** *“And every year we do annual work plans for the ministry, consequently we do the budgeting...but there is a huge mismatch between execution of the budget and the execution of work plans...The budget execution process has been so dynamic that it has made it difficult, it has created an excuse for failure to implement the performance management system.”*  
(Paraphrased)

However, in some cases ministries faced challenges with the alignment of budgets and annual plans to SPs at the preparation stage:

**(Ministry C)** *“Worse enough, you find a situation where people are doing budgeting, but are not using the strategic plan. So, there is a weak linkage between budgeting and the strategic plan.”*

Some of the reasons for the challenges faced in the execution of budgets and annual plans in line with SPs included: the lack of adequate resources, political interference, conflicting interests and the lack of understanding of SPs by implementing staff. The lack of adequate resources and the presence of political interference sometimes resulted in staff losing respect for SP.

In terms of the human resource recruitment process, evidence shows high recognition among ministries of the need to have appropriate structures to support the implementation of SPs:

**(Ministry E)** *“Therefore, for a strategy to be developed, the structure should have the relevant manpower to support its implementation and this is something that we endeavour to do. It took quite some time to implement the last strategic plan that we are currently reviewing because the treasury authority we got did not really provide the adequate human resource that we required for the execution of our strategy.”* (Paraphrased)

However, as can be seen from the above interview extract, efforts to align SPs with appropriate structures were hampered by the lack of adequate resources. This was confirmed by the finding that resource inadequacy was a major challenge. However, the extent to which this applies in reality could not be established by this study.

Finally, the alignment of staff performance appraisals to SPPs seems to have been the greatest challenge. Whereas some ministries did undertake staff performance appraisals, in most ministries these were either not undertaken at all or undertaken only during promotions and confirmations. In cases where they were undertaken, they were done in ways that did not link them to the achievement of strategic objectives:

**(Ministry D)** *“There is a performance management system but it has been very ineffective. The expectation is that with the departmental work plan, you have individual work plans and you monitor individual performance. But that performance system has been ineffective for years. It has been active only at confirmation of an officer or in an adhoc manner.... Now, in the public service there are no performance contracts between the president and Ministers or the Secretary to Cabinet and Controlling Officers. There is none. They will think about it, they may even talk about it, but it won't be there...In other words, at the end of the month or at the end of the quarter, there is no time when the*

*Controlling Officer will be held accountable for their performance based on set targets. Consequently, that does not exist between Controlling Officers and their directors and the rest of the employees.”*

One of the reasons for this weakness was the absence of rewards in terms of notches to good performing employees. Whereas it is important for the government to find ways of incentivizing employees whose performance contributes to the achievement of strategic objectives, it would also be helpful to develop a feedback appreciating culture. Performance appraisals serve much more than the provision of monetary reward but also as a mechanism for providing feedback and correction to employees on their performance. In light of this, some ministries indicated having effective staff performance appraisals systems:

**(Ministry B)** *“Towards the end of each year, we fill in an annual performance appraisal form which is called APPAS system. .... So, we get back to the table and see whether what one implemented in the whole year is in line with his/her key result area. ...The key result areas come from the job description which is linked to the strategic plan and legal mandate of the institution.”*

It is important for the government to institutionalise performance appraisal systems right from the top to the bottom in the public sector. This could be achieved by making performance appraisals mandatory through the introduction of legislation:

Overall, much needs to be done regarding the extent of integration of ministry SPPs with other ministry processes if SP is to have any significant positive effect on the performance of the public sector in Zambia.

### **Inter-ministerial Process Harmonisation**

As was established in Section 6.2.2.6, ministry mandates are closely related and inter-dependent. Consequently, it is essential for ministries to work towards achieving cooperative advantage through unit of purpose. The established interrelatedness and interdependence of ministry mandates entails a need for close harmonisation of ministry SPPs.

Evidence suggests that ministries appreciated the importance of achieving inter-ministerial harmonisation of SPPs and that efforts in this regard were being made. Efforts were being

made through the use of more consultative processes. Mechanisms were also in place through which Permanent Secretaries met and shared details of their programmes:

**(Ministry K)** *“So, we sit as a team and see how we are able to fit into each other’s plans, meaning that strategic plans are not stand alone documents. ....So, the idea behind having consultative meetings with our stakeholders is to ensure that whatever we include in our strategic plan is not in conflict with another ministry’s strategic plan because we are all part of the Government.”*

However, some ministries did express dissatisfaction with the extent of harmonisation that existed. This is despite the efforts they were making to address this issue:

**(Ministry G)** *“I would be very quick to say no, there is no harmonisation. The most negative thing I will mention to you in this interview is that the efforts we made to invite the key stakeholders, some of the key stakeholders actually did not avail themselves to our process. ...We have had very practical situations where for example in one district we had a project, when our Permanent Secretary went to visit the district to check on the project, he found another ministry doing a similar project at the same site as ours...”* (Paraphrased)

The above evidence shows that efforts were being applied towards achieving inter-ministerial harmonisation of SPPs although much more still needs to be done to institutionalise this across all ministries.

### **Process completeness**

Completeness of SP refers to the extent to which ministries implement it in full in terms of all its stages, i.e. formulation, implementation and monitoring and review (Management Development Division, 2001). The literature review established the importance of applying adequate effort to all stages of the SPP. In this vein, this study sought to establish the extent to which ministries in Zambia pay attention to all stages of the SPPs.

Evidence suggests that more attention was paid to the formulation stage compared to the implementation and monitoring and review stages. Most ministries indicated having a SP on one hand while on the other having challenges with implementing and monitoring and reviewing it.

**(Ministry D)** *“Generally, implementation of strategic plans in the government has been ineffective because the system itself is not effective. ...Therefore, you have the planning processes and the execution processes, but the M and E system is dysfunctional because of these discontinuities.”*

Evidence suggests that there is need to strengthen implementation and monitoring and review mechanism in ministries. Whereas it is essential for ministries to develop and implement their own internal monitoring mechanism, institutionalisation of the role of external monitoring will be very helpful:

**(Ministry H)** *“That (external monitoring) would be very important. We may do our own internal performance audits even midterm evaluation, but evaluation is not concrete if it is not done by an independent person because sometimes we could have softer spots for ourselves. ...I think it is very important to do so because this will have an oversight on the ministries.”*

In Zambia, there have been improvements in compliance with the public financial regulations mainly so because of the role that the Office of the Auditor-General and Parliament have played in the monitoring of government expenditure. However, much as budgeting and government expenditure are important, they are just implementation mechanisms of either SPs or other programmes. It would, therefore, add more value for these mechanisms to be monitored in the context of SP. In light of this, it is recommended that the capacity of the Auditor-General’s office and that of Parliament in providing external oversight over SP be enhanced.

In the absence of legislation to enforce SP, its implementation is left to the mercy of top leaders. This seems to have been the case in some ministries:

**(Ministry M)** *“The then Minister came on board in ... She confused a strategic plan with a sector master plan. So, she shot down the strategic plan.... when the new Minister came in, that is when we decided to launch the ministry’s.... strategic plan and it is the best strategic plan for the ministry.”*

Introduction of legislation and institutionalising the linkage of the performance management systems to SP will therefore be key to enforcing SP:

**(Ministry M)** *“I would support the tying of the strategic plan to performance management although that would include tying the performance contracts for top leaders in the ministry to the APPAS so that there is alignment”.*

#### **6.2.4.2 Process Formality and Flexibility**

Formality refers to the extent to which the SPP is systematic, deliberate and orderly. Flexibility on the other hand refers to the extent to which the SPP is responsive to changes in the environment. The increasing complexity of environments, as was established in Section 6.2.2 entails the need for more formality yet on the other hand the increasing instability requires more flexibility. It is, therefore, important that ministries aim to achieve a balance between formality and flexibility in their SPPs. In view of the importance of this balance, this study sought to establish the extent of formality and flexibility of ministry SPPs.

In terms of formality, ministry SPPs are highly formal in that all ministries indicated having a standard of developing written SPs. In terms of what guides the process, all ministries indicated that their processes were guided by the MDD which based its process on the SMM.

In light of the weak monitoring and review systems, it is reasonable to expect that not so many ministries undertook scheduled SP reviews. However, some ministries did endeavour to make their SPPs responsive to changes in the environment. For example, one of the ministries sought to achieve this by adopting a short SP horizon of 3 years. 25% of the ministries amended their SPs following the revision of the 6<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan. On the overall however, ministries were expected to at least conduct a middle term review of their SPs, although the extent to which this was done was not established in this study. Further, there were attempts to align all ministry SP horizons to the electoral cycle as a means of avoiding the need to make changes in the event of change of government.

**(Ministry H)** *“Initially, in our ministry, what I saw was the lack of alignment of the strategic plan with the electoral cycle.... However, we received guidance from Cabinet Office to align the strategic plans to the electoral cycle ....”*



### 6.2.4.3 Role and Structure of Planning Functions

#### Structure of Planning Functions

As established in Section 6.2.2.7, ministries in Zambia can be grouped into three categories based on the structure of their planning functions. Ministries that had planning departments had their planning functions headed by Directors who were in senior management and who reported directly to Permanent Secretaries. This is in line with findings by Grant (2003) and Hendrick (2003) that planning functions were headed by senior staff. Assigning responsibility for SP to senior staff is a means of demonstrating management's commitment to it. Other than concerns of staffing levels, ministries in this category were content with the current structures of their planning departments:

**(Ministry C)** *"The structure if well filled up should be able to be responsive to the needs of the ministry."*

Ministries with planning units had their planning function headed by Chief Planners who were at middle management level. In one of these ministries, the Chief Planner reported directly to the Permanent Secretary while in the other one the Chief Planner reported to the Director Human Resources and Administration. This study did not attempt to establish the reasons for this kind of structure in these ministries. However, assigning responsibility for SP to staff at middle management raises questions as to the commitment of these ministries to SP. This was particularly stated as a barrier to SP in these ministries:

**(Respondent M)** *"I only want to emphasise that one of the weaknesses of the strategic planning process in the public service is that there is no leadership and it is delegated to the people who do not have the final authority in decision making".*

Ministries in this category and those that had adhoc planning committees felt that the structures of their planning functions were not appropriate:

**(Ministry F)** *"....we don't have a planning department in this ministry, so it's one of the strategies and a performance indicator that we have included in the strategic plan that we must have a planning department by ...."*

Considering the importance of the role played by planning functions in coordinating ministry activities, as discussed below, it is recommended that responsibility for SP be

assigned to dedicated senior staff who have adequate authority to make decisions and rehearse with other departments without fear (Hendrick, 2003). Doing so is going to allow for more attention to be paid to SP hence enhancing its quality in these ministries. Further, this would give planning functions more authority to effectively carry out their coordination role.

### **Role of Planning Functions**

General consensus was that planning staff played a very critical role in implementation of SP:

**(Ministry I)** *“We are at the centre of it.... However, we are the driving force of the strategic plan”.*

The main role played by planning functions was that of coordination of ministry SPPs and other activities. This encompassed the formulation, implementation and monitoring and review stages of SP. It also encompassed the provision of information, fundraising and development of policies:

**(Ministry F)** *“We are the lead, but all departments participate in the process. ...So, we just co-ordinate and consolidate the budget.... So, we provide information to all the departments who would like to use that information as they come up with their targets...”*

Evidence suggests that planning functions in ministries employed consultative approaches where strategies were developed by line managers and other stakeholders and their role was that of simply coordinating and guiding the process and consolidating SPs. This is in line with Poister (2010), Hendrick (2003) and Bryson and Roering (1987)’s recommendations that the role of planning departments should be that of coordinating, facilitating and supporting planning efforts across the organisation. This minimizes what Mintzberg (1994) called the “*fallacy of detachment*”.

However, evidence also suggests that most effort was directed at the formulation stage:

**(Ministry F)** *“So, we came up with a strategic plan in order for it to help us achieve the goals we would like to achieve in the next five years although its implementation has been poor...The monitoring function is basically not effective because, currently, our ministry does not have an M&E system”.*

Further, the extent to which these aspects of coordination were performed varied between ministries with ministries without planning departments lagging behind in most cases.

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that the capacity of planning functions in coordinating SP implementation and monitoring and review should be enhanced.

#### **6.2.4.4 Stakeholder Participation**

##### **Stakeholder Participation**

Stakeholder participation is critical to the successful implementation of SP. Consequently, this research sought to establish the nature and extent of stakeholder participation in ministry SPPs. For purposes of the qualitative research, stakeholders were categorised into two groups namely, internal and external stakeholders.

Evidence suggests an increase in the extent of participation of both internal and external stakeholders in Ministry SPPs. The SPPs of ministries are now more consultative and participatory:

**(Ministry E)** *“Firstly, we always involve the technical departments because they are closer to the ground in terms of different issues. Secondly, we involve our clients and stakeholders because our mandate is to serve their needs. ...we have to get some feedback from our clients such as the business community, the non-state actors, civil society organisations and private sector associations.”* (Paraphrased)

This finding is expected of ministries in Zambia considering that Zambia, as established in Section 2.2.6, is a democratic country and that the government has been working towards improving public participation in its programmes.

However, participation of both internal and external stakeholders is higher at the formulation stage with challenges being evident at the implementation and monitoring and review stages. This is in line with Pereira’s (2009) findings. This, perhaps, is the reason for the perceived poor implementation of SPs.

**(Ministry G)** *“On the formulation part, the involvement of top management is impressive. I am afraid on the implementation I think that’s where the ministry tends to face a lot challenges as well as the monitoring aspects.”*

Within each stakeholder group, there were variations in terms of the extent to which they were involved in SP. In terms of internal stakeholders, variations existed between top, middle and lower management with top and middle management participating to a higher extent than operational staff:

**(Ministry F)** *“I think top management fully participates in the process. Middle management also tries, but the lower management does very little. ...I think we need to sensitise and encourage them to participate in the development of the strategic plan so that as they implement it, they can have an understanding of what it is.”*

Considering that operational staff are an essential means through which SPs are implemented and that they are more likely to have intimate knowledge of what is happening on the ground, it is vital that ministries enhance their participation in SP. Failure to do so may result in the development of strategies that are out of touch with reality and for which they will not take ownership hence negatively affecting implementation.

The external stakeholder groups mentioned included; other government departments, cooperating partners and civil society organisations. The main roles they performed included provision of; information at the formulation stage, funding at the implementation stage and feedback at the monitoring and review stage.

**(Ministry B)** *“....they are our informers and these include the donors, co-operating partners, statutory institutions and citizens whom we call our clients in this case...”* (Paraphrased)

**(Ministry E)** *“So, where maybe the Treasury might be having some challenges, we have received some bit of backstopping from co-operating partners.”*

However, some ministries indicated discomfort with the extent to which their SPPs were participative. This implies the existence of variations between ministries in the extent of stakeholder participation that existed.

**(Ministry G)** *“Like I said earlier, in this process we only involved the key stakeholders. I would say that we did not really cast the net wide. We should have involved more stakeholders in this process.”*

Findings on involvement of external stakeholders should be interpreted with caution as they (external stakeholders) were not given an opportunity to indicate their views. This presents an opportunity for further research to investigate external stakeholder views regarding the extent to which they participate in ministry SPPs. Further, research could also explore details of which external stakeholders are involved in Ministry SPPs.

### **Vested and Conflicting Interests**

Four ministries were asked to share what their experience with conflict resulting from vested interest was. One of these ministries indicated that they had never experienced conflict resulting from vested interest during the SPP but that such conflicts were experienced during policy formulation:

**(Ministry E)** *“I do not think I have had any experience resulting from conflicts during the strategic planning process..., but those may come in when we are formulating for instance a policy....”*

The other three ministries indicated that conflict resulting from vested interest was one of the challenges they faced in SP:

**(Ministry L)** *“I can say it has been a tedious and painful process because of vested interest. Each one will have their own view of how the thing should be done....”*

Conflicts resulting from vested interest were seen as resulting in wastage of time and resources. The deliberative nature of SP was the means for managing this conflict. Ministries engaged in extensive dialogue in attempts to reach consensus among stakeholders with conflicting interests:

**(Ministry L)** *“So, what has helped is really the lengthy bargaining and negotiation process to have certain things go in or to have certain things not adopted. But it’s not easy. This means that whatever is brought to the table is carefully scrutinised before it is admitted to be part of the process.”*

Another tool that was used was that of making reference to government policies in times when consensus could not be achieved.

**(Ministry E)** *“....Thus, when tackling these challenges, we normally look at the broader Government policy on a particular issue and that is what prevails.”*

#### **Role Played by the Management Development Division (MDD).**

There was general consensus among ministries regarding the importance of the role played by the MDD in spearheading and coordinating the implementation of public sector reforms in Zambia:

**(Ministry B)** *“....the MDD is very instrumental in performance appraisals which form the basis for the development of each strategic plan in Government ministries. The MDD is usually very active when you request them to come and spearhead the process of developing a strategic plan.”*

**(Ministry J)** *“So, in terms of their role in this process, it has been very critical. Probably this ministry would not move to anywhere had it not been for their involvement.”*

Not only did ministries appreciate the importance of the role played by the MDD, they also commended the commitment and attitude with which they carry out their work. This kind of commitment and attitude is essential in developing commitment to SP on the part of ministries and other government agencies.

However, there are a number of areas where the MDD needs to critically review and possibly direct their attention. First and foremost, ministries felt that the MDD paid more attention to the formulation of SPs and neglected the other stages:

**(Ministry B)** *“However, after it has been developed, it becomes our baby. We do not get to interact with them (MDD) anymore and we only get to interact with them again during its review.”*

Enhancing monitoring of the performance of SP in ministries is likely to have a positive effect on its implementation. To achieve this, the MDD should consider developing internal capacity within government agencies to develop their own SPs. This measure will

leave them with more time to oversee and monitor the implementation of SP in the public sector:

**(Ministry J)** *“...Let me recommend that MDD should implement plans for capacity building in planning. This will save them time from doing the neat grits as these will be done by the ministries. Them will just oversee, do the quality enhancements and advise where they see there are gaps so that the document is strengthened.”*

Secondly, some ministries indicated that the MDD was too rigid in some cases and imposed their on strategies and ideas on them:

**(Ministry M)** *“So, when we told them how we would like to run our ministry, they brought in what they felt was appropriate. Therefore, even when we are developing the strategic plan, they boxed in what they felt was appropriate. Now once that is done, the element of ownership goes away”* (Paraphrased).

Ownership of SPs is very critical to implementation. In view of this, it is recommended that the MDD should make every effort to avoid having ministries feeling that SPs are being imposed on them. SP, by its nature, is a deliberative process (Bryson, 2011), so, they should endeavour to deliberate with ministries to ensure that there is consensus for ministries to own the resulting SPs.

Thirdly, ministries indicated that the MDD was too scientific in their approach at the expense of being realistic:

**(Ministry E)** *“....but we need to be realistic because there are other factors that make it difficult for organisations to implement their strategic plan. For instance, we are not supposed to give an excuse of not having money and yet even the Bible says money is the answer to all things... “*

As much as it is important to be scientific, it is also critical to be alive to the realities that surround us. Beer and Eisenstat (2000) argued that managers should not avoid talking about challenges but rather should honestly talk about them and face them head on if they are to be overcome.

Fourthly, some respondents felt that the tools being used by the MDD were too old and were not adequate for the dynamics of today's business environment:

**(Ministry D)** *“For me, they have taken too long to review their tools and techniques. This process which MDD has been using has been there for too long and new techniques and tools of preparing strategic plans have come up. In my view, they are better than the one we are using.”*

Fifthly, some ministries felt that it was difficult to access the MDD at times and they attributed this to inadequate staffing levels:

**(Ministry J)** *“I also suspect that they have too much on their table, because you will find that the same person who is assisting us could be attached to three or four strategic plans with other ministries that are being developed at the same time. So there are certain times when they are hard to reach.”*

With limited staffing levels, the MDD can only go so far. The proposal to enhance the capacity of ministries to implement SP should be able to help address this challenge. In fact, after 22 years of SP in the Zambian public sector, one wonders why ministries’ still lack internal capacity.

Finally, there is also need for the MDD to provide leadership to the process by tying the SPP to performance management systems starting from the top such that ministers should have performance contracts with the president which are tied to the achievement of strategic objectives.

#### **6.2.4.5 Use of Strategy Tools**

As was highlighted in Section 2.3.5.5, strategy tools aid and guide managers in making strategic decisions by providing a systematic structure for generating and analysing information and alternatives, for selecting choices and for measuring performance. Considering that ministries in Zambia face complex environments and multiple stakeholders, it is expected that they can benefit significantly from the use of strategy tools. These can enable them to dynamically consider all relevant factors and manage stakeholders.

Evidence shows that there is limited use of strategy tools in ministries in Zambia. This confirms Stonehouse and Pemberton’s (2002) concerns as cited by Murphy (2011) regarding the limited use of strategy tools in practice. Establishing the reasons for the limited use of strategy tools was outside the scope of this study but one could speculate that perhaps it was due to the lack of appreciation of the value of these tools by public managers



or maybe public managers did not find available strategy tools to be useful in their ministries (Murphy, 2011). A further possibility, as stated by Ministry M, is that public managers found application of these tools to be expensive. This, however, provides an opportunity for further research to establish why there is limited application of strategy tools in ministries in Zambia and to establish how best some of the available tools can be adapted to the Zambian context (Williams and Lewis, 2008).

The most commonly used tools were SWOT and PESTLE analysis with seven ministries mentioning the use of SWOT and four the use of PESTLE. McKinsey 7S was also mentioned by two ministries.

Contrasting views regarding the usefulness and adequacy of these tools were evident. Some respondents indicated that SWOT and PESTLE were very useful while others that these tools were not adequate in addressing the information needs of their ministries and, as such, recommended the use of more recent tools like the balanced score card.

**(Ministry B)** *“...So, the MDD has been keen in using the SWOT Analysis.... So, that has been very good and useful.”*

**(Respondent D)** *“This process which we have been using has been there for too long and new techniques and tools of preparing strategic plans have come up. In my view, they are better than the one we are using. ....I feel that government now should be more client focused than internal system focused ....I like the balanced scorecard as a tool for strategic planning and strategy implementation...”* (Paraphrased)

### **6.2.5 Barriers to Strategic Planning.**

Suklev and Debarliev (2012) stated that, *“between the ideal of strategic planning and the reality of implementation lie many difficulties”*. This study, therefore, sought to establish the difficulties that lie between the ideal of SP in ministries in Zambia and the reality of its implementation.

Evidence suggests that ministries in Zambia face a number of challenges in implementing SP, some of which are discussed below.

#### **1. Inadequate financial resources**

Inadequate financial resources emerged to be the most cited challenge to SP with all ministries in the study stating so. This challenge was twofold. Firstly, in terms of

inadequate budget allocation and, secondly, inadequate funding releases against approved budget allocations:

**(Ministry A)** *“First of all, budgeted funds against actual funds received. Not to cry that the ministry has not been receiving funds but it’s just everywhere in government. We are not receiving 100% of what we budgeted. So it is not easy to fully implement the strategic plan.”*

A measure which some of the ministries have taken in trying to address this challenge has been that of sourcing funds from other sources other than the government:

**(Ministry E)** *“However, there has been quite some good will from co-operating partners. We have had co-operating partners coming through to support us in areas that relate to executing our mandate...So, where, maybe, the Treasury might be having some challenges, we have received some bit of backstopping from co-operating partners.”*

Closely related to the inadequacy of financial resources is the challenge of inadequate human resources.

## **2. Inadequate human resources**

Whereas ministries endeavoured to develop necessary structures to support the implementation of their SPs as established in Section 6.2.4.1, staffing levels still remained a serious challenge. This challenge was also twofold i.e. the lack of adequate staffing numbers and the lack of appropriate skills. This challenge arose from the lack of treasury authority to recruit which mainly was due to the lack of adequate financial resources on the part of the treasury:

**(Ministry C)** *“Like currently, the ministry is severely understaffed contrary to the recommendations and structure proposed in the strategic plan. The staffing levels and sometimes the skills in the ministry do not support the full implementation of strategic plans.”*

An avenue that requires attention with regards the two challenges mentioned above is an assessment of the extent to which ministry SPs are realistic in light of the available resources. Whereas it is important to develop SPs that push people to aim high, it is equally important to ensure that SPs that are developed are attainable. Otherwise, they will serve only to frustrate those that are supposed to implement them:

**(Ministry C)** *“This is because the strategic plans are not realistic in that they are not tied to the available human and financial resources.... Usually the strategic plans tend to be overambitious.”*

Related to the challenge of inadequate staffing is the issue of staff transfers.

### **3. Staff Transfers**

The Zambian government has a policy of rotating staff between ministries. However, in some cases, this was done in a manner which posed a challenge to the effective implementation of SP. In some cases people, who were key in developing a SP for one ministry were transferred to another ministry even when their presence was still critical to their current ministry. This posed a challenge of continuity and in some cases resulted in delays in SPPs and in a loss of focus:

**(Ministry D)** *“We start the process, for example, of coming up with the plan, then the accountable person for that plan is moved, then another person comes who has very little understanding of what we went through to come up with the drive, the passion to deliver.”*

It is, therefore, recommended that the transfer policy in the Zambian public sector should be implemented in a way that shows commitment to SP such that it does not disadvantage its implementation.

### **4. Inappropriate work culture**

The issue of inappropriate work culture continues to be a challenge. With an inappropriate work culture and attitude it is difficult to implement even a very good SP:

**(Ministry A)** *“Work culture also remains a challenge, we can’t run away from it. That is why we are always trying to implement programmes to improve productivity. ...If you remember also, in the Presidential pronouncement there is an issue of embracing the Kaizen concept in government.... But as it is, it still remains a challenge.”*

In an attempt to address this challenge, the Zambian government has implemented and continues to implement a series of public sector reforms. The top leadership has continued to show commitment to developing an appropriate work culture as can be seen from the 2016 Official Opening of Parliament Presidential Address where the President gave a directive for the public sector to embrace the Kaizen Concept:

## **5. Inadequate Process alignment**

One of the keys to successful implementation of SP is the alignment of SPPs with other organisational processes. However, as was established in Section 6.2.4.1, this posed a big challenge for most ministries:

**(Ministry C)** *“Worse enough, you find a situation where people are doing budgeting, but are not using the strategic plan. So, there is a weak linkage between budgeting and the strategic plan. With regard to the recruitment process, again, there is a weak link.”*

**(Ministry D)** *“That has been the biggest challenge in probably the whole government system... There is a performance management system...but that performance system has been ineffective for years...Generally, implementation of strategic plans in the government has been ineffective because the system itself is not effective.”*

In light of this barrier, it is recommended that ministries should endeavour to align their SPPs with other organisational processes.

## **6. Lack of management commitment**

Some ministries faced the challenge of lack of management commitment to their SPPs:

**(Ministry M)** *“I only want to emphasise that one of the weaknesses of the strategic planning process in the public service is that there is no leadership and it is delegated to the people who do not have the final authority in decision making.”*

## **7. Political interference**

One of the differentiating features of the public sector is the presence of a political arm on one hand and a civil service on the other. Failure by the political leadership to show respect for and commitment to SP can frustrate efforts by civil servants consequently resulting in a loss of respect for SP on their part as well. Whereas some ministries did not indicate political interference to be a challenge, others did:

**(Ministry E)** *“I think political interference. That becomes a challenge because in some instances, we are steared into a direction that was not in our initial strategic plan and it becomes very difficult to implement it...”*

## **8. Conflicting/ vested interests**

Some ministries indicated that they experienced the challenge of conflicting interest:

**(Ministry L)** *“The other challenge has been vested interest. When we started the process of strategic planning in 2013, I could see that, sometimes, directors were not ready to listen to each other.”*

## **9. Inadequate inter-ministerial coordination**

As established in Section 6.2.4.1, the relatedness and inter-dependence of ministry mandates entails the need to ensure inter-ministerial harmonisation of SPPs. However, evidence suggests that the lack of inter-ministry coordination presented a challenge for some ministries:

**(Ministry E)** *“When it comes to the implementation process in the public system, I mentioned one of the issues of inter-ministerial co-ordination or policy pronouncements. ...So, sometimes that becomes a challenge ....”*

## **10. Inadequate communication of SPs**

For a SP to be successfully implemented, it is important that it is adequately communicated to all relevant stakeholders (Murphy, 2011). The SP should be embedded in the minds of

people. However, critical review of the responses by one of the respondents highlighted the absence of adequate communication of SPs. In that particular ministry, the SP was communicated via the distribution of copies and a launch by the minister. A further matter of concern was that, in this same ministry, their current SP which was finalised about a year prior to this study had not been printed as of the date of the interview.

There is need for intensive campaigns to raise awareness of SPs for effective implementation to be achieved. However, the means of communicating SPs other than the one referred to above were not established in this study.

#### **11. Bureaucracy and SPP taking too long**

Respondents from some ministries indicated that the SPP took too long.

*(Ministry J) “I will say for the past four years because the process started in 2011, for some reasons it has dragged on to this point. Otherwise, formulation is supposed to take a year or a year and half, so that people have the implementation within the plan in terms of period.”*

#### **12. Inadequate SP knowledge among staff**

Coupled with the human resource challenges discussed earlier was the issue of the inadequate SP knowledge among staff in ministries. Respondents were of the view that the lack of understanding of SP resulted in staff not taking an active role in the process:

*(Ministry L) “I think the understanding of people is also a challenge.... Sometimes, there is a lot of misunderstanding and because of this sometimes you also take long to collect some of this information.”*

#### **13. Lack of adequate enforcement mechanism**

Currently, enforcement of SP in the Zambian public sector is done through a cabinet circular. Although not explicitly stated by any of the respondents as a challenge, analysis of the current nature and extent of adoption of SP in ministries suggests that the current enforcement mechanism is weak and thus requires strengthening. This strengthening could be achieved through the introduction of legislation and external monitoring to mandate and govern the implementation of SP.

### 6.2.6 Progression of the Strategic Planning Process

Evidence suggests mixed views among ministries regarding the progression of SP with some ministries indicating that their processes had improved over the years and others that there was no improvement.

Among those who indicated that their SPPs had improved, the majority were of the view that the improvement was biased towards the formulation stage and that very little improvement was recorded on the implementation and monitoring stages. This finding is consistent with the findings in Section 6.2.4.1 where it was established that more attention was paid to the formulation stage compare to the implementation and monitoring and review stages. Further, the improvement noted was mainly in terms of the quality of the SP documents and the extent of stakeholder participation:

**(Ministry A)** *“Certainly, it has, because when I came here there was a strategic plan but that strategic plan never had an accompanying implementation plan. Now, we have a strategic plan, an implementation plan and a new structure to implement it, so it has improved.”*

**(Ministry B)** *“Yes, it has improved especially that it involves a number of stakeholders from its formulation until its validation.”*

**(Ministry K)** *“The planning itself is done in a very effective manner because of the availability of skills to develop documents.... However, the major challenge is implementation...”*

The improvement was attributed to among other things changes in employee mindset, improvements in employee quality, improved top management appreciation of the need for proactive and strategic management and the institutionalization of continuous monitoring:

**(Ministry A)** *“Over the years, there has been a change of mind-sets... So, mind set has changed and I am sure over the years staff have changed in terms of qualification.”*

**(Ministry E)** *“The main drivers of improvement have been the industrialisation of continuance monitoring so we are able to see where we are*

*going and what we are doing and can provide remedial action at appropriate points. ...Also, at leadership level from top management, there is an appreciation of the need to have a focus and direction in terms of what needs to be implemented and that basically trickles down.”*

On the other extreme were respondents who indicated that the SPP in their ministries and, indeed, in the entire public sector had not improved. Interestingly, both respondents who carried this view were in top management and had served in the public sector the longest:

*(Ministry M) “No, although there is a lot of room for improvement. I am sure you will come across ministries that developed their fifth or fifth strategic plans, but very few of them celebrate a 100 per cent success rate.”*

*(Ministry D) “No. I came into contact with the strategic planning process in 1994. At the height of the public service reform and there was a lot hope, a lot of excitement at that time. And a lot of things happened. But from that point, no. Now, strategic planning is just one of the things.”*

### **6.3 Findings from the Quantitative Research**

#### **6.3.1 Overview**

The quantitative research was based on the use of a widespread self-completion questionnaire. Prior to distributing the questionnaire, authority was obtained from each participating ministry’s management. The questionnaire was distributed by the researcher, in person, to officers who were nominated to the study by respective ministries. Targeted respondents included officers from different departments who were involved in each ministry’s SPP.

The targeted sample for this instrument was six (6) respondents from each of the twenty (20) government ministries in Zambia resulting in a total targeted sample of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents. In terms of ministries, a response rate of 80% (16 ministries) was achieved. Based on the sixteen (16) ministries, a total of ninety six (96) questionnaires were distributed from which fifty six (56) were completed resulting in a response rate of 58%.

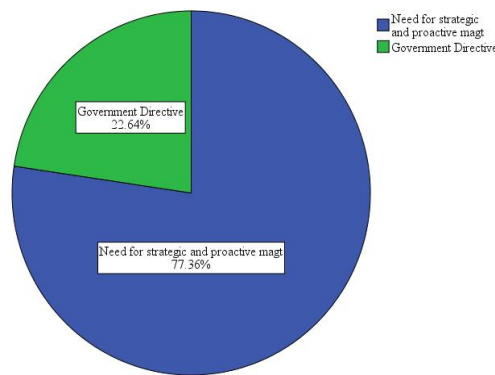


### 6.3.2 Ministry General Information

#### 6.3.2.1 Adoption of Strategic Planning

There was general consensus among all respondents that their ministries had adopted SP. In terms of the driving forces for the adoption of SP by ministries, evidence in Figure 6.5 shows that the majority of respondents, 77%, indicated that the main driving force for their adoption of SP was the need to strategically and proactively manage ministries. This was followed by the requirement to comply with the government's directive that all ministries should adopt SP for which 23% of respondents subscribed to. These findings are consistent with the findings from the qualitative phase.

**Figure 6.5 Reasons for Adoption of Strategic Planning**



#### 6.3.2.2 Public Sector Environment

The Environment within which ministries operated was considered to be medium to highly complexity and medium to highly stable. 41% of respondents indicated that environmental complexity was medium followed by 24% who indicated that the environment was complex to a somewhat high extent. 20% indicated that complexity was high, 6% that it was very high.

In terms of environmental stability, 35% of respondents indicated that it was medium followed by 25% who indicated that the environment was stable to a somewhat high extent. 15% indicated that stability was high, 8% that it was very high.

These findings are consistent with the findings from the qualitative research with regard to environmental complexity but not with regard to stability. Contrary to the findings here,

findings from the qualitative research suggested that ministry environments were increasing unstable.

**Table 6.6 State of the Public Sector Environment**

What is your assessment of the state of your ministry's environment?

	1 Very Low		2 Low		3 Some What Low		4 Medium		5 Some What High		6 High		7 Very High		Total	Count	Mean	S.D
	0	0%	2	4%	3	6%	21	41%	12	24%	10	20%	3	6%	51	5	1.160	1.274
Environmental Complexity	0	0%	2	4%	3	6%	21	41%	12	24%	10	20%	3	6%	51	5	1.160	1.274
Environmental Stability	0	0%	3	6%	6	12%	18	35%	13	25%	8	15%	4	8%	52	5	1.274	

### 6.3.3 General Respondent Information

Various criterion were set for targeted respondents including the following;

- Respondents should have been involved in ministry SP to ensure that knowledgeable responses were obtained.
- Respondents should have been from different departments to ensure validation of responses across departments.
- Respondents should have been from different levels of management to ensure validation of responses across management levels.
- Respondents should have been gender representative.

#### 6.3.3.1 Respondent Experience in Public Sector SP in Zambia

Evidence from Table 6.7 shows that 33% of respondents had worked in the public sector for 11 to 15 years followed by 29% who had worked for more than 20 years. 16% had worked for 16 to 20 years, 13% for less than 5 years and 9% for 6 to 10 years. Cumulatively, 87% had worked in the public sector for more than 5 years.

It is evident from the foregoing that the majority of respondents had worked in the public sector long enough to be able to provide knowledgeable and informed responses. However, there is also a down side to this in that long experience with something may make one complacent and get used to current ways of doing things. In this regard, response from long serving respondents should be interpreted with caution.

In terms of the number of years that respondents had worked in their current ministries, evidence from Table 6.8 shows that 45% of respondents had worked in their current ministries for less than 6 years followed by 28% who had worked in their current ministries for 11 to 15 years. 13 % had worked for 16 to 20 years, 9% for 6 to 10 years and 5% for more than 20 years. Cumulatively, 55% had worked in their current ministry for more than

5 years. This means that a fair majority of respondents had worked long enough in their current ministry to be able to provide knowledgeable and informed responses.

**Table 6.7 Respondents by Years Worked in the Public Sector**

		Cumulative			
Years		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	0-5	7	12.5	12.7	12.7
	6-10	5	8.9	9.1	21.8
	11-15	18	32.1	32.7	54.5
	16-20	9	16.1	16.4	70.9
	> 20	16	28.6	29.1	100.0
	Total	55	98.2	100.0	
Missing	Missing Data	1	1.8		
Total		56	100.0		

**Table 6.8 Respondents by Years Worked in Current Ministry**

		Cumulative			
	Years	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	0-5	25	44.6	44.6	44.6
	6-10	5	8.9	8.9	53.6
	11-15	16	28.6	28.6	82.1
	16-20	7	12.5	12.5	94.6
	> 20	3	5.4	5.4	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

The increase to 45% in the proportion of respondents who had worked in their current ministries for less than 6 years compared to 13% for the same duration but in respect of the public sector in general is indicative of the rotation of staff by government between ministries. This is supported Figure 6.6 which shows that 44% of respondents had been involved in another ministry's SPP. These findings are in line with the findings from the qualitative phase regarding the existence of rotation of staff between ministries but not regarding the duration of experience of respondents in their current ministries. More respondents in the quantitative research had longer experience with their current ministries compared to those in the qualitative research.

In terms of the duration of respondent involvement in SP in their current ministries, Table 6.9 shows that the majority (74%) of respondents had been involved in their current ministry's SPP for less than 6 years follow by 20% for 6 to 10 years, 4% for 11 to 15 years and 2% for 16 to 20 years. Cumulatively, only 26% of respondents had been involved in their current ministry's SPP for more than five years. On a positive note, however, evidence in Figure 6.6 shows that 44% of respondents had been involved in another ministry's SPP. This pattern is similar to the one observed in the qualitative research where the majority of respondents had been involved in their current ministry's SP for less than 5 years but had been involved in SP for another public sector organisation before.

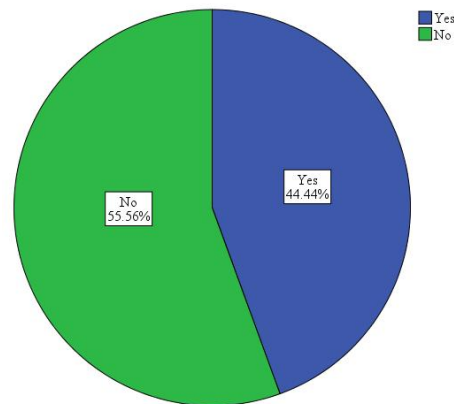
This evidence demonstrates that all the respondents had adequate experience in the SPPs of their ministries and, therefore, were in a position to provide knowledgeable responses. Further, the fact that 44% of respondents had been involved in another Ministry's SPP meant that their experience from the other ministries gave them a broad perspective of SPPs in the Zambian public sector.

**Table 6.9 Respondents by Years of Involvement in Strategic Planning in Current Ministry**

	Years	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-5	40	71.4	74.1	74.1
	6-10	11	19.6	20.4	94.4
	11-15	2	3.6	3.7	98.1
	16-20	1	1.8	1.9	100.0
	Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing	Missing Data	2	3.6		
Total		56	100.0		

The high proportion of respondents (74%) for the 0 to 5 years period is evidence of the increase in the extent of involvement of internal stakeholders in the SPPs in the recent past. This is supported by responses in Section 6.3.4.4 which shows that the extent of involvement of internal stakeholder was high.

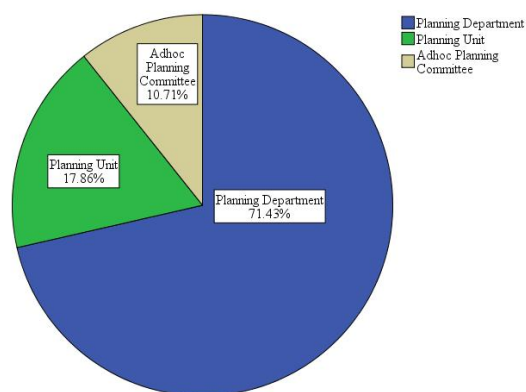
**Figure 6.6 Respondent Involvement in Strategic Planning in other Ministries**



### **6.3.3.2 Respondents by Structure of Planning Function**

As indicated earlier in Section 6.2.2.7, ministries in the Zambian public sector were grouped into three (3) categories based on how their planning function was structured. The three (3) categories included those with planning departments, those with planning units and those with adhoc planning committees. Figure 6.7 shows that 71% of respondents were from ministries that had a planning department, 18% from those that had a planning unit and 11% from those with adhoc planning committees. This distribution of respondents allowed for insight to be developed on the nature and extent of adoption of SPP in ministries under each of the categories.

**Figure 6.7 Respondents by Structure of Planning Function**



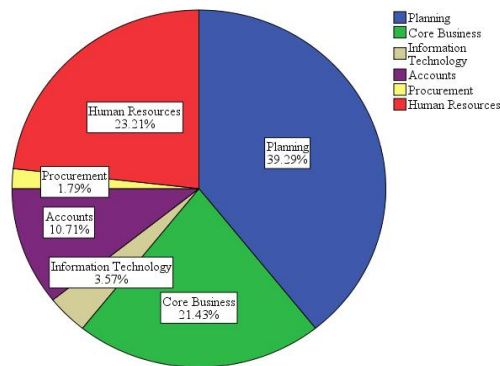
### **6.3.3.3 Respondent Departments**

The combination of respondents that participated in the quantitative research satisfied the respondent department criterion in that respondents who completed the questionnaires were from different departments. 39% of the respondents represented Planning, 23% Human

Resources, 21% Ministry Core Business, 11% Accounts, 4% Information Communication and Technology and 2% Procurement (see Figure 6.8 below). Although the Information Communication and Technology and Accounts and Procurement functions were sections falling under the Planning and Policy departments and the Human Resources and Administration departments respectively under ministry organisational structures in Zambia, these three functions were classified as separate departments for purposes of this study.

This distribution of respondents provided an opportunity to compare responses across departments. This is despite the factor that the extent to which various departments were represented varied between ministries. In extreme cases, only officers from planning departments were nominated to the study by some ministries.

**Figure 6.8 Respondents by Department**

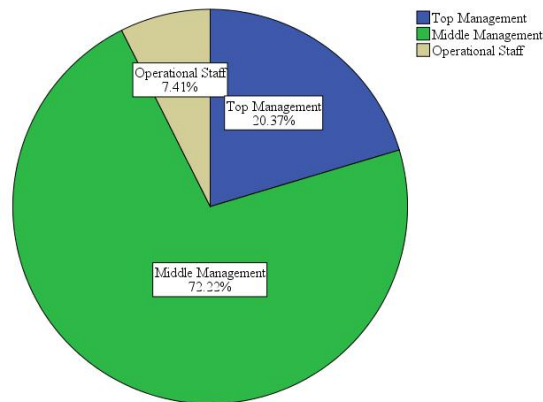


#### 6.3.3.4 Respondent Positions

The majority of respondents (72%) were in middle management followed by those (20%) who were in top management. Representation of operational staff was low at 7% (see Figure 6.9). This pattern is similar to that observed in the qualitative research. This, perhaps, could be reflective of the low level of involvement of lower level staff in ministry SPPs. Considering that the most important criterion was that of involvement in ministry SPPs, this combination of respondents was considered appropriate despite the low representation of operational staff.

Again, the distribution of respondents among management levels varied between ministries with some ministries only nominating respondents from the middle management level. However, despite the low representation of top management and worse still of operational staff, the researcher was able to validate responses across management levels.

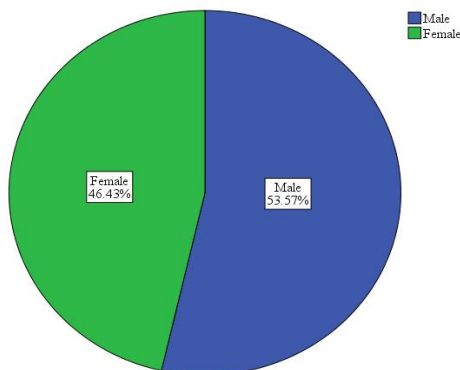
**Figure 6.9 Respondents by Position**



#### **6.3.3.5 Respondent Gender**

Gender representation among respondents was fairly balanced with 46% being female and 54% being male (see Figure 6.10). As such, the Researcher was able to validate responses across gender lines by comparing response from males against those from females.

**Figure 6.10 Respondents by Gender**



#### **6.3.4. Strategic Planning Process Characteristics**

##### **6.3.4.1 Comprehensiveness**

##### **Depth and Breadth of Information Analysis**

To establish the extent of comprehensiveness of environmental analysis in the Zambian public sector, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which their ministries monitored a variety of internal and external environmental factors. Internal environmental factors included human resources, financial resources, organisational structure, physical assets and organisational culture. External environmental factors included international community trends, demographic trends, political factors, technological developments,

economic trends, government regulations, public expectations, Vision 2030, industries serviced, social conditions and labour market trends.

Evidence shows that most internal environmental factors were monitored to a moderate to somewhat high extent. 39% of respondents indicated that their ministries monitored organisation structure and organisation culture to a moderate extent. This was followed by human resources and physical assets for which 31% and 30% of respondents respectively indicated “moderate extent”. Analysis of means show that human resources and organisational structure were monitored to a somewhat high extent while physical assets and organisational culture were monitored to a moderate extent.

With regards monitoring of the external environment, most notable was the extent of monitoring government regulations and vision 2030 for which a majority of respondents, i.e. 42% and 41% respectively, indicated “high extent”. These factors are important in ensuring harmonisation of SPs with government policies. The other factors for which a higher proportion of respondents indicated a high extent included public expectations (37%), economic trends (34%) and financial resources 30%. Factors for which a higher proportion of respondents indicated a moderate extent included industries serviced (41%), social conditions (39%), international community trends and labour market trends (each 35%) and technological developments (28%). Worryingly, demographic trends are monitored to a somewhat low extent with a higher proportion (29%) of respondents indicating so.

Analysis of means indicate that external environmental factors are monitored to a moderate to high extent with the most monitored being government regulations and vision 2030 and the least being demographic trends. Further, evidence suggests a higher monitoring of the external environment compared to the internal. This is contrary to the findings from the qualitative phase where it was found that the internal environment was monitored more than the external.

Analysis of the data shows variations between respondents on the extent of monitoring of environmental factors as can be seen in Table 6.10. These variations were evident at different levels, i.e. within ministries and across ministries (Appendix 5), within departments and across department (Appendix 6) and within positions and across positions (Appendix 7). This raises questions as to the extent to which those involved in the SPPs of



ministries in Zambia have uniform understanding of the process. Further, this suggests that comprehensiveness of environmental analysis varies between ministries hence the need to identify the ministries that are lagging behind in order to help them come up to pace.

**Table 6.10 Comprehensiveness of Monitoring Environmental Factors**

Please indicate the extent to which your ministry monitors the following areas.

	1			3 Some			5 Some	What								
	Never	2		Low	What	Low	4 Moderate	High	6		High	7	Very	High	Total	
															Count	Mean
Human Resources	0	0%	4	7%	3	6%	17	31%	13	24%	14	26%	3	6%	54	4.7
Financial Resources	0	0%	3	5%	4	7%	13	23%	9	16%	17	30%	10	18%	56	5.1
Organisational Structure	0	0%	3	6%	5	9%	21	39%	9	17%	13	24%	3	6%	54	4.6
International Community Trends	1	2%	3	6%	12	24%	17	35%	7	14%	9	18%	0	0%	49	4.1
Physical Assets	0	0%	5	9%	6	11%	16	30%	12	23%	13	25%	1	2%	53	4.5
Organisational Culture	2	4%	6	11%	6	11%	21	39%	11	20%	6	11%	2	4%	54	4.1
Demographic Trends	2	4%	2	4%	15	29%	14	27%	8	16%	7	14%	3	6%	51	4.1
Political Conditions	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%	13	24%	17	31%	16	29%	8	15%	55	5.3
Technological Developments	0	0%	1	2%	11	20%	15	28%	11	20%	15	28%	1	2%	54	4.6
Economic Trends	1	2%	0	0%	5	9%	15	28%	11	21%	18	34%	3	6%	53	4.9
Government Regulations	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4	7%	10	18%	23	42%	18	33%	55	6.0
Public Expectations	0	0%	2	4%	2	4%	13	25%	11	21%	19	37%	5	10%	52	5.1
Vision 2030	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	8	15%	10	19%	22	41%	13	24%	54	5.7
Industries Serviced	0	0%	2	4%	7	13%	22	41%	4	7%	17	31%	2	4%	54	4.6
Social Conditions	0	0%	1	2%	6	12%	20	39%	11	22%	12	24%	1	2%	51	4.6
Labour Market Trends	2	4%	6	11%	7	13%	19	35%	7	13%	10	19%	3	6%	54	4.2

Despite the variations stated above, analysis of means between departments highlighted a consistent pattern ranging from moderate to high for all factors under considerations. This consistency also applied between means for top management and middle management respondents. Whereas this consistency applied for operational staff respondents, exceptions were evident for the extent of monitoring international community trends, physical assets, organisational culture, social conditions, labour market trends and Demographic trends. This could be due to the limited involvement of operational staff in monitoring the environment.

Overall, evidence shows that ministries in Zambia are adopting increasing comprehensive approaches to environmental analysis in their SPPs.

However, considering the importance of developing in-depth understanding of an organisation's environment in developing SPs, it is recommended that much more be done to enhance the comprehensiveness of environmental analysis.

#### Alternatives Identification and Analysis

The extent of comprehensiveness with which alternatives are identified and analysed was assessed by asking respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with two statements. Both statements received an "agree" rating from a higher proportion of respondents, i.e. 33% for numerous alternatives being identified and 36% for numerous alternatives being analysed. A mean of agree was achieved for both statements (Table 6.11).

**Table 6.11 Comprehensiveness of Alternative Identification and Analysis**

On a scale of 1 to 7, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.  
(1= strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). In our ministry...

	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Some What Disagree		4 Neutral		5 Some What Agree		6 Agree		7 Strongly Agree		Total	Mean
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage		
Numerous alternatives are identified	0	0%	1	2%	4	7%	3	5%	13	24%	18	33%	16	29%	55	5.7
Numerous alternatives are analysed	0	0%	2	4%	2	4%	5	9%	10	18%	20	36%	16	29%	55	5.7

Analysis of means by respondent departments shows that respondents from Planning, Information Technology, and Accounts departments agreed to a higher extent, i.e. "agree", with both statements compared to their counterparts from Human Resources, Procurement and Ministry Core Business departments i.e. "somewhat agree" (Appendix 9). Analysis of responses by respondent position show that top management respondents indicated that the comprehensiveness with which alternatives were identified and analysed was a little lower, i.e. with a mean of "somewhat agree" to both statements, than was indicated by middle management and operational staff who achieved a mean of "agree", (Appendix 10).

Further, analysis of responses for each of the statements indicates the existence of variations at all three levels i.e. between respondents within the same ministry (Appendix 8), within departments (Appendix 9) and within positions (Appendix 10). This raises

questions as to the extent to which those involved in the SPPs of ministries in Zambia have uniform understanding of the process.

On the overall, however, evidence as tabulated in Table 6.11 suggests that comprehensive identification and analysis of alternative strategies is undertaken in the SPPs of ministry in Zambia although this varies between ministries. This is in line with the findings from the qualitative research.

#### Sources of Information

The extent of comprehensiveness of sources of information was assessed by asking respondents to indicate the extent to which their ministries used internet, public hearings, Central Statistics Office reports, sector publications and government publications as sources of information.

At the time of the study, no literature existed on the main sources of information that ministries used in their SPPs. These findings therefore provide a contribution to the literature which will be of practical use to stakeholders who wish to provide information to ministries. Stakeholders who wish to have their views considered by ministries will know how efficient their mediums of disseminating information are and thus be able decide on whether to change or to work towards increasing their awareness as sources of information.

Government publications emerged as the most popular source of information with 41% of respondents indicating “very high extent”. This was followed by sector publications for which 23% indicated use to a very high extent. 29% of respondents indicated that internet and Central Statistics Office reports were each used to a high extent. The least used source of information was public hearings for which 22% of respondents indicated a somewhat high extent (Table 6.12). These findings are consistent with those from the qualitative research in that government publications are among the main sources of information and in that internet, Central Statistics Office reports and public hearings are not used as much.

Analysis of responses within ministries revealed variations between respondents. For instance, in Ministry N (Appendix 11), 20% of respondents indicated the internet was never used while another 20% indicated the internet was used to a high extent. These variations were also evident in responses from respondents from similar positions (Appendix 13) and those from similar departments (Appendix 12). Analysis of responses between ministries shows that ministries varied significantly in their sources of information. This could be

explained by the differences in information needs that ministries have. However, despite the variation in sources of information for different ministries, government publications emerged the most used source of information across all ministries. This is in line with the findings under comprehensiveness of monitoring environmental factors that the most monitored factors were government regulations and vision 2030 both of which are government publications.

**Table 6.12 Comprehensiveness of Sources of Information**

Please indicate the extent to which the following are used as sources of information in your ministry's strategic planning process.

	Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree with the statement																Total	Count	Mean
	1 Never				3 Some				5 Some				7 Very High						
	2 Low		What Low		4 Moderate		What High		6 High										
Internet	4	7%	6	11%	4	7%	9	16%	10	18%	16	29%	6	11%	55	4.6			
Public Hearings	2	4%	3	5%	8	15%	12	22%	12	22%	10	18%	8	15%	55	4.7			
CSO Reports	0	0%	3	5%	1	2%	13	24%	11	20%	16	29%	11	20%	55	5.3			
Sector publications	1	2%	0	0%	7	13%	9	17%	11	21%	12	23%	12	23%	52	5.2			
Government Publications	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	3	5%	7	13%	22	39%	23	41%	56	6.1			

Analysis of responses by respondent departments revealed very interesting findings in that respondents from ministry core departments indicated a higher extent of use of all sources of information compared to what was indicated by respondents from planning departments whose responsibility is to provide information.

### Strategic Planning Scope

It is essential that SP is as all-encompassing as possible to ensure that all important areas of a ministry are covered. In light of this, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which their ministries' SPs covered a number of selected areas including human resources, information technology, ministry core business and infrastructure.

Evidence in Table 6.13 shows that a high majority (75%) of respondents indicated that their ministries' SPs included ministry core business to a very high extent and that a mean of "very high" was achieved. Information technology, human resources and infrastructure were included to a high extent as indicated by 38%, 36% and 33% of respondents respectively. The least included area was infrastructure for which a mean of "somewhat high" was achieved. These results suggest that SPs in ministries are comprehensive in scope and are in line with findings from the qualitative research.

**Table 6.13 Comprehensiveness of Strategic Planning Scope**

To what extent are the following areas included in your ministry's strategic plan?

	1 Never		2 Low		3 Some What Low		4 Moderate		5 Some What High		6 High		7 Very High		Total	
																Count Mean
Human Resource	0	0%	0	0%	4	7%	5	9%	8	14%	<b>20</b>	<b>36%</b>	19	34%	56	5.8
Infrastructure	1	2%	1	2%	4	7%	6	11%	11	20%	<b>18</b>	<b>33%</b>	14	25%	55	5.5
Information Technology	0	0%	0	0%	2	4%	10	18%	9	16%	<b>21</b>	<b>38%</b>	14	25%	56	5.6
Core Business	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	6	11%	8	15%	<b>41</b>	<b>75%</b>	55	6.6

Analysis of responses by ministry in Appendix 14 shows that the extent to which ministry SPPs included the four areas under consideration varied except for ministry core business for which there was high consensus among ministries that it was included to a high to very high extent. This confirms the finding in the qualitative research that ministry mandate was the main determinant of scope in ministry SP.

One notable case is Ministry B where the respondent indicated that infrastructure was never included in their ministry's SP. Evidence shows variations in responses from some ministries regarding the extent to which areas under consideration were included in SPs.

Analysis of responses by respondent departments in Appendix 15 show that despite there being some variations between respondents from similar departments, there was consensus across departments that SP in ministries were inclusive of the four areas under consideration. For example, ministry core business was indicated as being included to a very high extent by 73% of respondents from Planning, 83% from Ministry Core Business, 100% from Information Technology, 60% from Accounts, 100% from Procurement and 69 % from Human Resource.

Analysis of responses by respondent positions in Appendix 16 show that respondents from top management indicated that the extent of inclusion of human resources, infrastructure and information technology in SPs was lower, with a mean of "somewhat high", than was indicated by respondents from middle management and operational staff who achieved means of "high" for all three areas in exception of infrastructure where operational staff achieved a mean of "somewhat high".

## **Process Integration**

Integration of SPPs with other organisational processes is critical to the successful implementation of SP. This is so because other organisations processes are key means of operationalising SPs. To establish the extent to which ministry organisational processes were aligned to SPPs, respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 7 the extent to which they disagreed or agreed with 5 statements which represented the budgeting, the individual performance appraisal, the procurement planning and the annual planning processes.

Evidence in Table 6.14 shows that integration of these processes varied from one process to another with the budgeting processes emerging as the most aligned process. 39 % of respondents “strongly agree” that the budgeting process reflected SP priorities and a mean of “agree” was achieved in this regard. This was followed by annual planning processes for which 39% of respondents also strongly agreed that annual plans were aligned with SPs and a mean of “somewhat agree” achieved. In terms of procurement plans being based on strategic objectives, 25 % of respondents strongly agreed with the statement with a mean of “somewhat agree” achieved. These findings are consistent with those from the qualitative research to the extent that they relate to the formulation of budgets and annual plans and not to their execution.

The biggest challenge seemed to be with the extent of alignment of staff performance appraisal systems for which 25% of respondents were neutral on the extent to which staff performance appraisals rewarded contribution to achievement of strategic objectives. The majority of respondents weighted towards the disagree dimension. This challenge was further highlighted by responses to the statement on whether non-compliance with SP was punished, to which most of the respondents disagreed, i.e. 24% indicated “strongly disagree” and another 24% “disagree”. These findings imply weaknesses in the mechanisms of enforcing SP in ministries. Where staff performance is not tied to strategic objectives, it is highly unlikely that staff will take SP seriously resulting in them doing whatever they please without regard for SPs. These finding are in line with those from the qualitative research.

**Table 6.14 Comprehensiveness of Strategic Planning Process Integration with other Organisational Processes**

On a scale of 1 to 7, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. (1= strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). In our ministry...

	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Some What Disagree		4 Neutral		5 Some What Agree		6 Agree		7 Strongly Agree		Total	
															Count	Mean
The budgeting process reflects SP priorities	1	2%	0	0%	6	11%	5	9%	10	18%	12	21%	22	39%	56	5.6
The staff performance appraisal process rewards contribution to strategic objectives	4	7%	7	13%	10	18%	14	25%	3	5%	7	13%	10	18%	55	4.2
Procurement Plans are Based on Strategic Objectives	3	5%	3	5%	7	13%	10	18%	8	15%	10	18%	14	25%	55	4.9
Non Compliance with SPP is Punished	13	24%	13	24%	8	15%	11	20%	3	5%	5	9%	2	4%	55	3.0
Annual Plans are Aligned with SPs	2	4%	3	6%	4	7%	8	15%	9	17%	7	13%	21	39%	54	5.3

Analysis of responses by ministry in Appendix 17 indicates that the extent of integration of organisational processes varied between ministries. Processes were more integrated in some ministries compared to others. Further, evidence in Appendix 17 shows variations in responses within ministries. For example, in Ministry K 20% of respondents strongly disagreed that procurement plans were based on strategic objectives, 20% were neutral, another 20% agreed and 40% strongly agreed. This lack of consensus within ministries raised questions as to how much respondents understood the SPPs of their ministries.

Analysis of responses by respondent departments in Appendix 18 shows that general consensus existed across departments that the budgeting process reflected SP priorities with a mean of “agree” achieved by respondents from Planning, Ministry Core business, Information Technology and Accounts departments. 36 % of respondents from Planning, 33% from Ministry Core Business, 50% from Information Technology, 67% from Accounts and 38% from Human Resources strongly agreed that budgeting processes in their ministries reflected SP priorities.

Challenges regarding the alignment of staff performance appraisals are also evident in responses across departments with the exception of responses from Ministry Core Business departments where a mean of “somewhat agree” was achieved and a higher proportion

(33%) of respondents strongly agreeing that their staff performance appraisal systems rewarded contribution to achievement of strategic objectives. 27% of respondents from Planning were neutral regarding the alignment of performance appraisal systems while 36% strongly disagreed that non-compliance with SP was punished with means of “neutral” and “disagree” achieved respectively. 50% of respondents from Information Technology departments strongly disagreed with the staff performance appraisal statement with a mean of “neutral” achieved while surprisingly 50% from the same departments strongly agreed with the statement that non-compliance was punished. Respondents from Accounts and Human Resources departments showed consensus for both statements. Both departments achieved means of “neutral” for the staff performance appraisal statement and “somewhat disagree” with the non-compliance statement.

Analysis of responses by respondent position in Appendix 19 shows that top management respondents were of the view that budgeting processes were aligned to a lesser extent to SPPs, with a mean of “neutral”, than did view middle management and operational staff respondents who achieved a mean of “agree”. 36% of top management respondents somewhat disagreed with the statement while 41% of middle management respondents and 50% of operational staff respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Another process where top management respondents did not seem to be in agreement with respondents from other positions is the annual planning process where they achieved a mean of “somewhat disagree” with 30% somewhat disagreeing while respondents from other positions achieved a mean of “agree” with 45% of middle management and 50% of operational staff strongly agreeing that annual plans were aligned to SPs.

One possible reason for these differences between top management perceptions and those of lower levels could be the desire by lower level staff to safeguard the current systems which do not strongly hold them accountable for their performance with regards the achievement of strategic objectives. Aligning staff performance appraisals and annual planning processes to SPPs would demand greater accountability on civil servants and a significant change in the way things are done, changes which are necessary if SP is to be successfully implemented.

With regards staff performance appraisal processes, there was general consensus across positions with all being neutral on the statement that staff performance appraisals rewarded



contribution to achievement of strategic objectives and somewhat disagreeing with the statement that non-compliance with SPPs was punished.

### Inter-ministerial Process Harmonisation

Harmonisation of SP across ministries and with wider government plans avoids conflicts in ministry SPs and therefore is critical in ensuring meaningful national development. Comprehensiveness of harmonisation of SPPs was assessed by asking respondents to indicate the extent to which they either disagreed or agreed with two statements one evaluating harmonisation across ministries and the other harmonisation with national plans.

Evidence in Table 6.15 shows high harmonisation of ministry SPs with national plans with the majority (51%) of respondents strongly agreeing that their SPs were aligned with vision 2030 and a mean of “agree” achieved. Harmonisation of SPs across ministries, however, appears to be weak with a higher proportion (24%) of respondents being neutral and a mean of “neutral” achieved. This finding is in line with that from the qualitative research and entails that much more effort needs to be made to enhance inter-ministerial harmonisation of SP.

**Table 6.15 Comprehensiveness of Strategic Planning Process Harmonisation**

On a scale of 1 to 7, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. (1=strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). In our ministry...

	<div> <div>1 Strongly Disagree</div> <div>2 Disagree</div> <div>3 Some What Disagree</div> <div>4 Neutral</div> <div>5 Some What Agree</div> <div>6 Agree</div> <div>7 Strongly Agree</div> </div>														Total	Count	Mean
	6	11%	3	5%	8	15%	13	24%	8	15%	9	16%	8	15%			
The SP is hamornised with plans in other Ministries	6	11%	3	5%	8	15%	13	24%	8	15%	9	16%	8	15%	55		4.3
SP is aligned with vison2030	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%	7	13%	7	13%	12	22%	28	51%	55		6.1

Analysis of responses by ministry reviewed that the extent to which SPP harmonisation existed differed between ministries. For example, Ministry K indicated lower harmonisation of SPs with plans of other ministries with a mean of “disagree” and 60% of respondents strongly disagreeing with the statement while Ministry M indicated higher harmonisation with a mean of “agree” and 50% of respondents strongly agreeing with the same statement (Appendix 20). Evidence also shows a consistent trend across ministries that harmonisation of ministry SPs with national plans was higher than that of SPs across

ministries. Harmonisation of SPs across ministries emerged to be serious challenge for most ministries except Ministry M.

Further, variations were evident within ministries on the comprehensiveness of harmonisation of SPPs across ministries and with national plans. For example, in Ministry J, 25% of respondents strongly disagreed that their SPs were hamornised with plans of other ministries, another 25% were neutral and 50% strongly agreed (Appendix 20). These variations raise questions as to the extent to which respondents understood their ministries' SPPs, the extent to which they were really involved in the processes and the commitment attached to SP.

An analysis of responses by respondent department in Appendix 21 shows consensus that alignment of ministry SPs with national plans was high with a mean of “agree” achieved in all departments except for procurement where the only respondent strongly agreed. With regard to the harmonisation of SPPs across ministries, general consensus was that it was weaker than their alignment of with national plans. Planning and Human Resource departments indicated that harmonisation of SPPs across ministries was weaker than did see other departments.

An analysis of responses by respondent position in Appendix 22 shows consensus among respondents from all departments that harmonisation of ministry SPs across ministries was weaker than that of SPs with national plans.

It is also evident that top management respondents felt that harmonisation of SPs both with plans of other ministries and with national plans was weaker with means of “Neutral” and “somewhat agree” respectively compared to views by respondents from lower positions. 40% of respondents from top management were neutral on the extent to which their SPs were hamornised with plans of other ministries and another 40% somewhat agreed that their SPs were aligned to vision 2030. Respondents from middle management achieved a mean of “Somewhat agree” for the former and “agree” for the later. 21% of respondents from middle management agreed to the former while 54% strongly agreed to the later. Operational staff achieved means of “agree” for the former and “strongly agree” for the latter. 50% of operational staff were neutral on the former while 100% strongly agreed to the later.

### **Process Completeness.**

A complete SPP comprises SP formulation, SP implementation and SP monitoring and review. It is essential that adequate attention is paid to all the three stages of the SPP for SP to be of any visible value. To assess the extent to which SPPs in ministries were comprehensive in terms of process completeness, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they disagreed or agreed with a series of statements. Attention paid to the formulation stage was assessed by the statement, “adequate attention is paid to strategy formulation”. Attention paid to strategy implementation was assessed by a series of statements which represented mechanisms of implementation. These included; budgeting process reflects SP priorities, Staff performance appraisal rewards contribution to achievement of strategic objectives, procurement plans are based on strategic objectives and annual plans are aligned with SPs. Statements assessing attention paid to the monitoring and review stages included: adequate SP monitoring measures are in place, strong SP compliance systems are in place and non-compliance with SP is punished.

Evidence in Table 6.16 shows that the level of attention paid to the three stages of the SPP varies with the highest attention being paid to the formulation stage and the least being paid to the monitoring and review stage. A higher proportion (36%) of respondents strongly agreed that adequate attention was paid to strategy formulation with a mean of “agree” achieved. In terms of the implementation stage, alignment of the budgeting process to the SPP emerged to be the main implementation mechanism. In this regard 39% of respondents strongly agree and a mean of “agree” was achieved. This was followed by the alignment of annual plans and procurement plans to SPPs for which a mean of “somewhat agree” was achieved. The weakest implementation mechanism was that of alignment of staff performance appraisal systems to SPPs.

With regard to the monitoring and review stage, 29% of respondents somewhat agreed that adequate measures were in place with a mean of “neutral” achieved. 27% were neutral about the existence of strong monitoring systems for which a mean of “neutral” was obtained. 24% disagreed that non-compliance with SP was punished and a mean of “somewhat disagree” was achieved in this regard.

These findings are in line with the findings from the qualitative research and are supported by evidence from Section 6.3.4.2.1 where respondents lacked consensus on how often schedule SP reviews were undertaken. This could be one of the reasons for the noted poor implementation of SPs in ministries.

**Table 6.16 Comprehensiveness of Process Completeness**

On a scale of 1 to 7, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.  
(1=strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). In our ministry...

	1 Strongly Disagree				3 Some What Disagree				5 Some What Agree				7 Strongly Agree				Total	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Count	Mean
Adequate Attention is Paid to Strategy Formulation	1	2%	0	0%	2	4%	4	7%	14	25%	15	27%	20	36%	56	5.8		
Budgeting Process Reflects SP Priorities	1	2%	0	0%	6	11%	5	9%	10	18%	12	21%	22	39%	56	5.6		
Staff Performance Appraisal Rewards Contribution to Strategic Objectives	4	7%	7	13%	10	18%	14	25%	3	5%	7	13%	10	18%	55	4.2		
Procurement Plan is Based on Strategic Objectives	3	5%	3	5%	7	13%	10	18%	8	15%	10	18%	14	25%	55	4.9		
Annual Plans are Aligned with SP	2	4%	3	6%	4	7%	8	15%	9	17%	7	13%	21	39%	54	5.3		
Adequate SP Monitoring Measures are in Place	3	5%	2	4%	8	14%	13	23%	16	29%	10	18%	4	7%	56	4.5		
Strong SP Compliance Monitoring system is in Place	3	5%	5	9%	11	20%	15	27%	11	20%	5	9%	5	9%	55	4.1		
Non Compliance with SP is Punished	13	24%	13	24%	8	15%	11	20%	3	5%	5	9%	2	4%	55	3.0		

A notable weakness of this study is that the statements assessing attention paid to the implementation stage were limited to budget, annual plan and procurement plan formulation and not to execution. This presents an opportunity for future studies to explore.

Analysis of responses by ministry in Appendix 23 reviews that the level of attention that was paid to the three stages of the SPPs varied between ministries with the majority of ministries paying more attention to SP formulation compare to implementation and monitoring and review. However, an exception of Ministry I exists where more attention was paid to implementation, monitoring and review compare to formulation. This finding, however, contradicts the finds from the interview respondent for the same ministry who suggested that inadequate attention was paid to implementation and monitoring and review.

Further, evidence shows the existence of variations between respondents within ministries. This raises questions as to real extent to which attention was paid to each of the three stages in ministry SPPs.

Analysis of responses by respondent department in Appendix 24 shows that general consensus existed across departments that more attention was paid to the formulation stage compared to the implementation and monitoring and review stages. All departments except the procurement department achieved a mean of “agree” that adequate attention was paid to strategy formulation. With regards the implementation stage, analysis of means for each of the four statements shows the existence of consensus across departments with each department achieving a mean of “somewhat agree”. Monitoring and review was seen to be weaker by Planning departments, with a mean of “somewhat disagree”, compared to other departments.

Evidence in Appendix 25 shows that general consensus existed across positions that more attention was paid to the formulation stage compared to the implementation and monitoring stages, the later receiving the least attention. Top management, however, felt that lesser attentions was paid to each of the three (3) stages with means of “Somewhat agree” for the formulations stage, “Neutral” for the implementation stage and “somewhat disagree” for the monitoring and review stage. This is compared to middle management and operational staff who achieved means of “agree”, “somewhat agree” and “neutral” for the formulation, implementation and monitoring and review stages respectively.

#### **6.3.4.2 Formality and Flexibility**

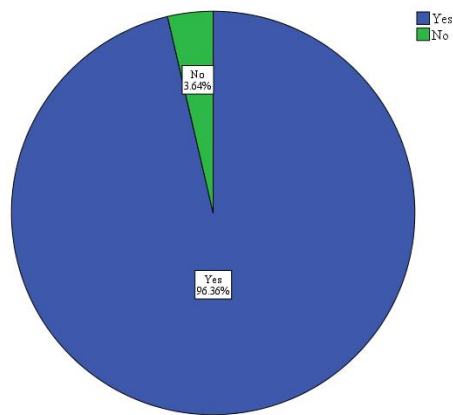
Process formality has been defined in Section 2.3.5.2 as the degree to which the SPP is systematic, deliberate and orderly. Whereas formality is important, it stifles flexibility of SPPs to changing environmental factors. The qualitative research established that the environment in which ministries operate is increasingly dynamic. Environment complexity demands more formality while environment instability demands more flexibility. Given that environments are made up of a blend of complexity and stability it is critical that SPPs are designed to achieve an appropriate blend of formality and flexibility.

In view of the importance of both formality and flexibility, this study sought to establish the extent to which both aspect were incorporated in ministries’ SPPs. Formality was measured in terms of the existence of written SPs and the extent to which SPPs were guided by the use of planning manuals, MMD SMM framework, standard forms and presentations while flexibility was based on the existence and frequency of scheduled SP reviews.

### Existence of Written Strategic Plan

Figure 6.11 shows that a very high majority of respondents indicated that they had written SPs. Only one respondent indicated the absence of a written SP. Other respondents from the same ministry as this respondent indicated that their ministry had a SP. The interview respondent for the ministry in question revealed that this ministry had a written SP but that it had not been printed and was long overdue. This could explain the respondent's position that their ministry did not have a written SP.

**Figure 6.11 Presence of Written SP**



### Written Planning Procedures and Forms

Table 6.17 shows that the main source of guidelines for the SPPs in ministries was the MDD SMM framework. 81% of respondents indicate that they used this framework. This is in line with findings from the qualitative phase that the MDD was the main source of guidance in ministry SPPs. This was followed by the use of presentations (40%), then the use of planning manuals (29%) and finally the use of standard forms (27%).

**Table 6.17 Planning Guidelines**

Which of the following are used in your strategic planning process?		
	Count	Percent
Use of Planning Manual	15	29%
Use of MDD SMM Framework	42	81%
Use of Standard Forms	14	27%
Use of Presentations	21	40%
Use of Other	1	2%

Interesting, in some ministries respondent views on which means were used varied as can be seen from Table 6.18. For example, in Ministry D 50% of respondents indicate that the

MDD SMM framework is used, while the other 50% did not select that this framework is used.

**Table 6.18 Planning Guidelines by Ministry**

Which of the following are used in your strategic planning process?

		Count	
Ministry D	Use of Planning Manual	3	75%
	Use of MDD SMM Framework	2	50%
	Use of Standard Forms	2	50%
	Use of Presentations	1	25%
	Use of Other	0	0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	
Ministry G	Use of Planning Manual	3	100%
	Use of MDD SMM Framework	1	33%
	Use of Standard Forms	1	33%
	Use of Presentations	3	100%
	Use of Other	0	0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	

### **Scheduled Strategic Plan Reviews**

The frequency with which scheduled SP reviews are carried out in ministries could not be established. This is because of the discrepancies in responses received. Of the 13 ministries that had more than one respondent, only 2 (13%), i.e. ministry “I” and “O” in Table 6.19, achieved consensus on the frequency of scheduled SP review.

These wide discrepancies could imply that respondents did not understand what was meant by schedule SP reviews. On the other hand, it could either mean scheduled SP reviews are rarely carried out or if they are carried out, then participation in performing them is limited to a few stakeholders. These two possible reasons imply the lack of institutionalisation of SP monitoring and review. The possibility of SP reviews being rarely carried out is in line with the findings in the qualitative research regarding the challenges faced in monitoring and review.

#### **6.3.4.3 Role and Structure of Planning Functions**

Planning functions play a critical role in the implementation of SP. The majority (71%) of respondents strongly agreed that planning functions play an important role. This is in line with the findings from the qualitative research.

**Table 6.19 Scheduled Strategic Plan Reviews**

How often does your ministry carry out scheduled strategic plan reviews? (Tick only one option)

	SP Horizon	Less than Annually	Bi Annually	Every 3 Years	Every 4 Years	Every 5 Years	Mid Term	Never done	Adhoc	Other	Total
	Years										Count
Ministry A	5	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1
Ministry B	5	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	1
Ministry C	5	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	50%	2
Ministry D	5	0%	50%	25%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	4
Ministry E	5	0%	33%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%	3
Ministry F	5	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4
Ministry G	5	67%	0%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3
Ministry H	5	0%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%	33%	3
Ministry I	5	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2
Ministry J	5	0%	25%	0%	50%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4
Ministry K	5	0%	20%	40%	20%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%	5
Ministry L	5	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	4
Ministry M	4	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	83%	0%	0%	6
Ministry N	5	0%	0%	0%	33%	33%	33%	0%	0%	0%	3
Ministry O	5	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2
Ministry P	5	0%	0%	0%	60%	20%	0%	0%	20%	0%	5

In light of the importance of the role played by planning functions, the research sought to establish these roles by asking respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements each representing a role identified from the literature. Roles assessed included preparing SPs, providing planning guidelines, preparing forecasts, conducting risk analysis, fostering coordination of SPPs, and fostering communication.

Evidence in Table 6.20 shows that planning functions in ministries carried out all the above-listed roles though to varying extents. With a mean of “agree”, 57%, 55%, and 48% of respondents strongly agreed that their planning functions fostered coordination of SP, provided planning guidelines and fostered communication respectively.

The role of preparing SPs is carried out by both planning functions and line managers. With a mean of “agree” achieved, 38% of respondents strongly agreed that planning units



prepared SPs while 30% agreed that line managers prepared SPs. The fact that a higher proportion (38%) of respondents strongly agreed that planning units prepared SPs than did, (19%), strongly agree that line managers prepared SPs suggests that planning functions were more involved in the preparation of SPs than line managers.

With a mean of “somewhat agree” 30% of respondents strongly agreed that planning functions prepared forecasts. The extent to which planning functions were involved in conducting risk analysis seems to have been limited with a mean of “neutral” achieved and 20% of respondents being neutral to the statement.

These findings are in line with findings from the qualitative research. However, these findings suggest that although planning functions in ministries carried out all the 6 roles in question, the extent to which they did so varied and thus there is need to enhance their carrying out of these roles in order to enhance SP in ministries.

**Table 6.20 Role of Planning Function**

On a scale of 1 to 7, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. (1= strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). In our ministry...

	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Some What Disagree		4 Neutral		5 Some What Agree		6 Agree		7 Strongly Agree		Total	
															Count	Mean
Planning unit prepares SPs	6	11%	4	7%	5	9%	10	18%	2	4%	8	14%	21	38%	56	4.9
Planning unit provides planning guidelines	2	4%	1	2%	2	4%	3	5%	3	5%	14	25%	31	55%	56	6.0
Planning unit prepares forecasts	3	5%	4	7%	5	9%	10	18%	9	16%	8	14%	17	30%	56	5.0
Planning unit conducts risk analysis	5	9%	6	11%	6	11%	11	20%	5	9%	10	19%	11	20%	54	4.5
Planning unit fosters coordination of SPs	3	5%	1	2%	1	2%	1	2%	4	7%	14	25%	32	57%	56	6.1
Planning unit fosters communication	2	4%	2	4%	3	5%	5	9%	5	9%	12	21%	27	48%	56	5.7
Line managers prepare SPs	3	6%	2	4%	7	13%	8	15%	7	13%	16	30%	10	19%	53	4.9
Planning unit plays an important role	2	4%	1	2%	0	0%	2	4%	1	2%	10	18%	39	71%	55	6.4

Analysis of responses by ministry in Appendix 26 shows that the extent to which planning functions performed the roles in question varied between ministries. For example, in Ministry E respondents disagreed that their planning function prepared forecasts and conducted risk analysis with means of “somewhat disagree” and “disagree” respectively. On the other hand, in Ministry G respondents stated that their planning function prepared forecasts and conducted risk analysis with means of “agree” and “strongly agree” respectively.

Further, variations in responses within ministries were evident. For example, in Ministry L, 20% of respondents strongly disagreed that their planning function fostered coordination of SP and provided planning guidelines while 80% strongly agreed with the two statements. In the same ministry 20% of respondents disagreed that their planning functions conducted risk analysis, 20% somewhat agreed, another 20% agreed and 40% strongly agreed. These variations raise questions on the extent of involvement of respondents in SP and on their knowledge of their ministries' SPPs.

Analysis of responses by respondent department in Appendix 27 shows general consensus across departments that the role played by planning functions is important. There is also consensus regarding the extent to which planning functions performed the roles in question. A perplexing finding, however, is that in some cases respondents from other department, other than Planning, indicated that planning functions performed some roles to a higher extent than was indicated by respondents from Planning. For example, respondents from Core Business departments indicated that planning functions conducted risk analysis more than did indicate respondents from Planning.

Analysis of responses by respondent position in Appendix 28 shows that top management respondents indicated that planning functions performed each of the roles in question to a lower extent than was indicated by middle management and operational staff respondents. General consensus existed between middle management and operational staff on the extent to which planning functions performed most of the roles under consideration. The discrepancy between top management perceptions and those of lower level staff could be reflective of discrepancies in the extent of involvement of the two groups in ministry SPPs. However, all respondents across positions appreciated the importance of the role of planning functions.

#### **6.3.4.4 Stakeholder Participation**

As discussed in Section 6.2.4.2, the SPP can be divided into three main stages namely formulation, implementation and monitoring and review. Involvement of key stakeholders at each of these stages is critical to the successful implementation of SP. In this regard, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which top management, middle management, operational staff and external stakeholders were involved at the each of the three stages of the SPPs of their ministries.

At the time of this study, no published literature existed on the extent of participation of stakeholders in the SPPs of the Zambian public sector. Therefore, this presents an original contribution to the literature which is of practical use to managers who are interested in enhancing participation of targeted stakeholders in SPPs of the Zambian public sector. Further, it provides public sector managers with an opportunity to assess the extent of participation of key stakeholders in their SPPs.

### Stakeholder Participation at the Strategic Plan Formulation Stage

Table 6.21 shows that the extent of involvement of key stakeholders at the SP formulation stage varied with middle management being the most involved followed by top management. With a mean of “high extent”, 49% of respondents indicated that middle management were involved to a very high extent while 46% that top management were also involved to a very high extent.

External stakeholders and operational staff both had a mean of “somewhat high” with 33% of respondents indicating that the former were involved to a high extent and 23% that the later were involved to a moderate extent. This suggests that external stakeholders and operational staff are involved at the formulation stage to a lower extent. These findings confirm the findings from the qualitative research.

**Table 6.21 Stakeholder Participation at the Strategic Plan Formulation Stage**

To what extent are the following stakeholders involved at the strategic plan formulation stage?

	1 Never		2 Low		3 Some What Low		4 Moderate		5 Some What High		6 High		7 Very High		Total	
	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean
Top Management	0	0%	1	2%	2	4%	2	4%	5	9%	20	36%	<b>26</b>	<b>46%</b>	56	6.1
Middle Management	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%	3	5%	4	7%	20	36%	<b>27</b>	<b>49%</b>	55	6.2
Operational Staff	1	2%	4	7%	7	13%	<b>13</b>	<b>23%</b>	9	16%	10	18%	12	21%	56	4.8
External Stakeholder	1	2%	6	11%	2	4%	13	24%	7	13%	<b>18</b>	<b>33%</b>	8	15%	55	4.9

Analysis of responses by ministry in Appendix 29 shows that the extent to which key stakeholders are involved at the SP formulation stage varied from one ministry to another. For example, in Ministry A, top management were involved to a very high extent, in Ministry B to a somewhat low extent and in Ministry I to a somewhat high extent.

Further, within ministries divergent views emerged regarding the extent of involvement of key stakeholders. For example, in Ministry D, 25% of respondents indicated that top

management were involved to a moderate extent, 25% to a somewhat high extent, 25% to a high extent and another 25% to a very high extent. With regard to the involvement of external stakeholders in the same ministry, 25% indicated that external stakeholders were never involved, 50% to a somewhat high extent and 25% to a high extent. These discrepancies raised questions as to the actual extent of involvement of stakeholders at the SP formulation stage and as to the extent of involvement of respondents in SPPs of their ministries.

Appendix 30 shows that general consensus existed across departments regarding the extent of involvement of key stakeholders at the SP formulation stage. Planning, Ministry Core Business, Accounts and Human Resources all indicated that top management and middle management were involved to a high extent as per the means achieved and that operational staff and external stakeholders to a somewhat high extent. Slight exceptions were, however, evident from the Information Technology department who indicated that all internal stakeholders were involved to a very high extent.

Appendix 31 shows that consensus existed across staff positions regarding the extent of involvement of stakeholders at the SP formulation stage. Respondents from all staff positions indicated that top management and middle management were involved to a high extent as per the means achieved.

A slight exception, however, was evident with regards the extent of involvement of operational staff and external stakeholders. Whereas top management and middle management indicated that operational staff and external stakeholders were involved to a somewhat high extent, operational staff indicated these two stakeholder groups were involved to a moderate extent.

### **Stakeholder Participation at the Strategic Plan Implementation Stage**

In terms of stakeholder participation at the implementation stage, evidence in Table 6.22 shows that top management, middle management and operational staff were involved to a high extent. With means of “high extent”, 54%, 50% and 39% of respondents indicated that top management, middle management and operational staff respectively were involved to a very high extent. With a mean of “somewhat high extent” external stakeholders were involved to a lower extent. 20% of respondents indicated a moderate extent.

Compared to the extent of involvement at the formulation stage, top management, middle management and operational staff were all involved to a slightly higher extent at the implementations stage as can be seen for the higher proportion of respondents who indicate “very high extent” for the later stage. Interestingly, these findings are at odds with findings from the qualitative research where it was found that stakeholder participation was higher at formulation compared to the implementation stage. External stakeholders were involved to a slightly lower extent during implementation.

**Table 6.22 Stakeholder Participation at the Strategic Plan Implementation Stage**

To what extent are the following stakeholders involved at the strategic plan implementation stage?

	1 Never		2 Low		3 Some What		4 Moderate		5 Some What		6 High		7 Very		Total	
					Low				High				High			
															Count	Mean
Top Management	0	0%	2	4%	0	0%	4	7%	6	11%	14	25%	<b>30</b>	<b>54%</b>	56	6.1
Middle Management	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	2	4%	9	17%	15	28%	<b>27</b>	<b>50%</b>	54	6.2
Operational Staff	0	0%	1	2%	5	9%	8	15%	6	11%	13	24%	<b>21</b>	<b>39%</b>	54	5.6
External Stakeholder	2	4%	5	9%	9	16%	<b>11</b>	<b>20%</b>	9	16%	11	20%	8	15%	55	4.5

Analysis of responses by ministry shows that the extent to which stakeholders were engaged at the implementation stage varied between ministries (Appendix 32). For example, in Ministry G, external stakeholders were involved to a very high extent while in Ministry P to a somewhat low extent. Further, variations were evident in some ministries in respondent perception. In Ministry D, for example, 25% of respondents indicated that external stakeholders were never involved, 50% that they were involved to a somewhat high extent and 25% to a high extent.

Compared to stakeholder participation at the formulation stage, varying situations were evident between ministries. In some ministries, some stakeholders participated more at the implementation stage compared to the formulation stage while in others the opposite was true and still in others participation was the same at both stages. In Ministry L, for example, the extent of participation of top and middle management at the implementation stage was higher than at the formulation stage while that of external stakeholders was lower and that of operational staff was the same. However, like at the formulation stage, external stakeholder participation at the implementation stage was lower in most ministries except three.

Appendix 33 shows that consensus existed across departments that top management, middle management and operational staff participated to a high extent at the

implementation stage although slightly lower for operation staff. Top management and middle management participation was indicated as having been high to very high while that of operational staff was somewhat high to high. With regard to external stakeholder participation, general consensus was that it was moderate to somewhat high indicating that it was lower than that of the other stakeholder groups.

In comparison to participation at the formulation stage, all departments except Information Technology indicated higher participation of operational staff at implementation compared to the formulation stage. Accounts and Information Technology departments indicated lower participation of external stakeholders during implementation compared to during formulation.

Appendix 34 shows that consensus existed across staff positions that top management, middle management and operational staff participation in implementation was high as indicated by the means of “high extent” although for operational staff top management achieved a mean of “somewhat high”. With regard to external stakeholder participation during implementation, top management indicated that it was moderate, middle management that it was high and operational staff that it was somewhat low. Overall, all staff positions indicated that external stakeholder and operational staff participation during implementation was lower than that of top and middle management.

In comparison to participation at the formulation stage, participation of external stakeholder was seen as being lower by top management and operational staff while that of operational staff was seen as higher by middle management and operational staff.

#### **Stakeholder Participation at the Strategic Plan Monitoring and Review Stage**

Table 6.23 shows that middle management participated the most in SP monitoring and review with 40% of respondents indicating that they participate to a very high extent and a mean of “high extent” achieved. This was followed by top management for whom 35% of respondents indicate “very high extent”. Then followed operational staff for whom 28% of respondents indicated “moderate extent”. Both top management and operational staff achieved means of “somewhat high”. External stakeholder participation was seen as the least with 20% of respondents indicating “moderate extent” and a mean of “moderate” achieved. These findings are consistent with the findings from the qualitative research.

**Table 6.23 Stakeholder Participation at the Strategic Plan Monitoring and Review Stage**

To what extent are the following stakeholders involved at the strategic plan implementation stage?

	1 Never		2 Low		3 Some What Low		4 Moderate		5 Some What High		6 High		7 Very High		Total	
															Count	Mean
Top Management	2	4%	2	4%	2	4%	8	15%	7	13%	15	27%	19	35%	55	5.5
Middle Management	1	2%	2	4%	2	4%	7	13%	9	17%	11	21%	21	40%	53	5.6
Operational Staff	1	2%	6	11%	2	4%	15	28%	13	24%	11	20%	6	11%	54	4.7
External Stakeholder	4	7%	8	15%	8	15%	11	20%	7	13%	10	19%	6	11%	54	4.2

In comparison to the first two stages, top management and external stakeholders participation during monitoring and review was seen to be lower. The lower participation of top management at this stage perhaps could be the reason for the identified weak monitoring and review in SPPs of most ministries as discussed earlier. Top management participation and will is essential for the successful implementation of programmes in any organisation. External stakeholders should also be a critical source of feedback and checks and balances, more so in public sector organisation. Enhancing their participation in monitoring and review should have a positive effect on the effectiveness of SPPs.

Middle management participation was seen to be consistent over the three stages of SPPs while that of operational staff was the same as at the formulation stage but lower than that at the implementation stage.

Analysis of responses by ministry in Appendix 35 shows that the extent of participation of stakeholders during monitoring and review varied between ministries. For example, top management participation was moderate in Ministry D, somewhat high in Ministry H, high in Ministry G and very high in Ministry N.

Further, discrepancies in responses within ministries were evident. In Ministry F, for example, 50% of respondents indicated that external stakeholders never participated in monitoring and review, 25% that they were involved to a somewhat low extent and another 25% to a high extent. In Ministry I, 33% indicated that top management never participated, 33% that they participated to a high extent and another 33% indicated very high extent. The implications of these discrepancies have been highlighted in earlier sections.

Top management participation was seen as being somewhat high by Planning, Information Technology and Procurement departments while Ministry Core Business, Accounts and Human Resources saw it as being high. Middle management participation was seen as being high by Planning, Information Technology, Accounts and Procurement departments while Ministry Core Business and Human Resources departments saw it as being somewhat high. Participation of operational staff was seen as being somewhat high by Planning, Ministry Core Business and Procurement. Information Technology saw it was being high while Accounts and Human Resources departments considered it moderate (Appendix 36).

With regard to external stakeholder participation, planning departments considered it to be somewhat low, Ministry Core Business and Information Technology departments considered it to be moderate, Human Resources departments to be somewhat high and Procurement to be high.

Appendix 37 shows that top management participation during monitoring and review was considered to be somewhat high by top management and middle management while operational staff saw it was being high. Middle management participation was seen as being somewhat high by top management and high by middle management and operation staff. Participation by operational staff was seen to be high by middle management and operational staff while top management considered it moderate. In terms of external stakeholders, top management and middle management considered it moderate while operational staff considered it somewhat low.

Compared to participation at the formulation and implementation stages, top management and middle management indicated that all stakeholder groups under consideration participated to a lower extent during monitoring and review. An exception, however, exists for participation of external stakeholders and middle management for which top management and middle management indicated that it was same as at the implementation stage. Further, operational staff indicated that all stakeholders participated at the monitoring and review stage to the same extent as they did at the implementation stage.

Table 6.24 provides a summary which compares the means of the extent of stakeholder participation at the three stages of the SPP which clearly shows that participation of top management and external stakeholders at the monitoring and review stage was lower than at the earlier two stages. Further, participation of external stakeholder is shown as being low at all stages of the SPPs.



These findings are consistent with the qualitative research findings to the extent that stakeholder participation during monitoring and review was lower than during the other two stages and that external stakeholder participation was lower at all three stages. However, with regard to participation during implementation, these results were at odds with those from the qualitative research.

**Table 6.24 Summary of means of Stakeholder Participation at Different Stages of the Strategic Planning Process**

	Strategic Plan Formulation Stage	Strategic Plan Implementation Stage	Strategic Plan Monitoring and Review Stage
Top Management	6.1 (High)	6.1 (High)	5.5 (High)
Middle Management	6.2 (High)	6.2 (High)	5.6 (High)
Operational Staff	4.8 (Somewhat High)	5.6 (High)	4.7 (Somewhat High)
External Stakeholder	4.9 (Somewhat High)	4.5 (Somewhat High)	4.2 (Neutral)

#### **6.3.4.5 Use of Strategy Tools**

Various strategy tools have been developed by researchers to assist managers in SP. However, at the time of this study there was no documented literature on the extent to which managers in the Zambian public sector utilised these tools. In view of the foregoing, this study presents an original contribution to the literature in this regard.

To assess the extent to which ministries in Zambia utilised strategy tools, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which their ministries used selected tools namely: SWOT, Ms Model, PESTLE, balanced scorecard, value chain analysis, stakeholder mapping and scenario planning.

Evidence in Table 6.25 indicates that the extent to which these tools were used varied from one tool to another. Further, evidence suggests that there is limited use of strategy tools in ministries in Zambia with the most used tool being SWOT analysis followed by PESTLE. This finding is in line with that from the qualitative research.

With a mean of “high extent”, SWOT analysis was indicated as being used to a very high extent by 64% of respondents. This was followed by PESTLE analysis for which 46% of respondents indicated use to a very high extent and in which regard a mean of “somewhat high extent” was achieved. 25% of respondents indicated that stakeholder mapping was used to a very high extent. Value chain analysis, Ms Model and scenario planning all achieved means of “moderate extent” with 24%, 25% and 21% of respondents respectively indicating that these tools had never been used in their ministries. The least used tool was

the balanced scorecard for which 32% of respondents indicated that it had never been used and a mean of “somewhat low extent” achieved.

**Table 6.25 Extent of Use of Strategy Tools**

Please indicate the extent to which the following tools are used in your ministry’s strategic planning process.

	1 Never		2 Low		3 Some What Low		4 Moderate		5 Some What High		6 High		7 Very High		Total	
	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean
SWOT	2	4%	0	0%	1	2%	4	7%	2	4%	11	20%	36	64%	56	6.2
Ms Model	14	25%	6	11%	8	15%	7	13%	4	7%	6	11%	10	18%	55	3.7
PESTLE	7	13%	2	4%	1	2%	2	4%	6	11%	12	21%	26	46%	56	5.5
Balanced Scorecard	18	32%	11	20%	9	16%	2	4%	7	13%	3	5%	6	11%	56	3.0
Value Chain Analysis	13	24%	10	18%	7	13%	3	5%	3	5%	11	20%	8	15%	55	3.7
Stakeholder Mapping	8	14%	9	16%	6	11%	3	5%	5	9%	11	20%	14	25%	56	4.4
Scenario Planning	11	21%	4	7%	4	7%	13	23%	7	13%	3	5%	13	23%	56	4.1

Analysis of responses by ministry in Appendix 38 shows that the extent to which each of the tools in question was used varied between ministries and that the most popular tools across ministries were SWOT and PESTLE analysis. Further, evidence shows that the use of strategy tools with the exception of SWOT and PESTLE was limited in most ministries.

Furthermore, evidence indicates the existence of variations in ministry responses. For example, in Ministry L, 20% of respondents indicated that the Ms Model was never used, 40% that it was used to a moderate extent and another 40% that it was used to a very high extent. In the same ministry, 40 % of respondents indicated that PESTLE was never used, 20% that it used to a high extent and 40% that it was used to a very high extent. It is surprising how respondents from the same ministry can have such divergent views regarding a tool which they use. These findings raise questions on the extent to which these tools were actually used and the extent to which the respondents were involved in SPPs.

Evidence in Appendix 39 shows that all departments indicated that the most used tools were SWOT and PESTLE analysis although the other departments, apart from Planning, indicated that these tools were used to a slightly lower extent compare to what had been indicated by respondents from Planning functions. This discrepancy could be due to the fact that respondents from planning functions were more likely have more understanding of the extent to which these tools were used because of their role in providing information. These tools are mainly used in the provision and analysis of information (Wright, Sotirios

and Daniela, 2013; Jarratt and Stiles, 2010; Gun and Williams, 2007). Consensus also existed across departments that there was limited use of strategy tools in ministries.

Perceptions on the extent of tool usage also varied between management positions with middle management indicating a higher extent compared to top management and operational staff (Appendix 40). Operational staff indicated the lowest extent. These discrepancies could be reflective of the differences in the extent of involvement of various levels of staff in ministry SPPs. However, consensus existed regarding the limited use of tools and that SWOT was the most popular tool.

### **6.3.5 Barriers to Strategic Planning in the Zambian Public Sector**

Successful implementation of SPPs is hindered by the existence of barriers. The quantitative research sought to identify the main barriers to SP in ministries in Zambia by asking respondents to indicate the frequency with which selected barriers were experienced by their ministries.

The barriers considered included: inadequate financial resources, inadequate communication of SPs, inappropriate organisation culture, inappropriate management & leadership style, inadequate alignment of processes to the SPP, political interference and vested interest, inadequate involvement of key stakeholders, inadequate enforcement mechanisms, inadequate communication during the SPP, bureaucracy and development of SPs taking too long. Other than the last two, these barriers were based on a review of the literature. Interestingly, most of these barriers also emerged from the qualitative research. This suggests that these barriers are common in most jurisdictions and have been barriers for a long time. This therefore raises questions as to why these barriers have not been resolved over the years.

Evidence suggest that the most common barrier was that of inadequate financial resources for which 34% of respondents indicated that it was experienced very often and a mean of “often” achieved. This finding was in line with findings from the qualitative research.

This was followed by the development of SPs taking too long. With a mean of “often”, 43% of respondents indicating that they experienced this barrier to a moderate extent. Inadequate communication of SPs, inappropriate organisational culture, inadequate alignment of organisation processes, political interference and vested interests, inadequate

involvement of key stakeholders, inadequate enforcement mechanisms and bureaucracy all had means of “moderate”.

These findings are consistent with findings from the other sections of the study. For example, with regards inadequate alignment of organisation processes and inadequate enforcement mechanisms, Table 6.16 shows that means of “neutral” were achieved with regards the extent to which processes were aligned and compliance of SP enforced. However, evidence in Table 6.27 shows that 40% of respondents indicated that introduction of legislation to enforce SP in the public sector would be beneficial. To this effect, a mean of “agree” was achieved.

The least experienced barriers were inappropriate management and inadequate communication during the SPP. The means for these two barriers were “rarely experienced” with 30% of respondents indicating “rarely” for the former and 38% for the later. However, considering the extent of variation in responses, it is reasonable for one to have expected inadequate communication to have been a major challenge.

**Table 6.26 Barriers to Strategic Planning in the Zambian Public Sector**

How often has your ministry experienced the following challenges in strategic planning?

	1 Never		2 Hardly Ever		3 Rarely		4 Moderate		5 Often		6 Very Often		7 Always		Total	Mean
	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean	Count	Mean		
Inadequate financial resources	1	2%	1	2%	1	2%	9	16%	15	27%	19	34%	10	18%	56	5.4
Inadequate communication of SPs	2	4%	1	2%	8	15%	21	40%	13	25%	5	9%	3	6%	53	4.3
Inappropriate organisational culture	2	4%	4	7%	12	22%	17	31%	10	19%	7	13%	2	4%	54	4.1
Inappropriate management & leadership style	5	9%	10	19%	16	30%	13	24%	6	11%	3	6%	1	2%	54	3.3
Inadequate alignment of processes to SPPs	2	4%	6	11%	15	27%	18	33%	9	16%	5	9%	0	0%	55	3.7
Political interference and vested interest	7	13%	2	4%	14	26%	13	25%	6	11%	7	13%	4	8%	53	3.9
Inadequate involvement of key stakeholders	1	2%	7	13%	18	32%	22	39%	5	9%	2	4%	1	2%	56	3.6
Inadequate enforcement mechanisms	2	4%	4	7%	12	21%	20	36%	10	18%	7	13%	1	2%	56	4.0
Inadequate communication during the SPP	4	7%	7	13%	21	39%	13	24%	5	9%	4	7%	0	0%	54	3.4
Bureaucracy	0	0%	2	4%	11	20%	16	30%	14	26%	7	13%	4	7%	54	4.5
Development of SPs taking too long	1	2%	2	4%	4	7%	23	43%	12	22%	10	19%	2	4%	54	4.5

On a scale of 1 to 7, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total	Count	Mean			
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree							
Introduction of legislation can enhance SP	2	4%	3	6	2%	8	15%	9	17%	21	40%	53	5.5

In some cases, discrepancies were evident in responses from within the same ministries. In Ministry G, for example, 33% of respondents indicated that the barrier of inappropriate management and leadership style was never experienced, another 33% that it was hardly ever experienced and a final 33% that it was often experienced. The implications of such discrepancies are discussed in earlier sections.

Inappropriate organisational culture was seen by all departments except Human Resource as experienced to a moderate extent. General consensus regarding the barriers of inappropriate management styles, inadequate alignment of processes, political interference, inadequate involvement of stakeholders, inadequate enforcement mechanisms, inadequate communication during the SPP and bureaucracy was that these are experienced to a lower

extent. An Exception however was with the Information Technology and the Human Resource departments which indicated that the barriers of political interference, inadequate involvement of stakeholders and inadequate enforcement mechanisms were experienced to a higher extent than did indicate the other departments.

Analysis of responses by respondent position in Appendix 43 shows that in most cases respondent perceptions varied depending on their positions. Barriers of inappropriate organisational culture, inadequate involvement of key stakeholders, political inference, inadequate enforcement mechanisms and inadequate alignment of processes were perceived by respondents across all position as being experienced to a moderate extent. Barriers of inadequate communication during SPPs and of SPs and inappropriate management style were perceived by top management as being experienced more often than was indicated by lower level staff. Inadequate financial resources, bureaucracy and development of SPs taking too long were perceived by operational staff as being experienced more often than was perceived by higher levels of staff.

#### **6.4 Comparative Analysis of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings**

A comparative analysis of findings from the two research methods shows that a number of findings from the qualitative research were confirmed and reinforced by findings from the quantitative research. Thus triangulation and validation was achieved across the research methods used.

##### **6.4.1 Common Findings from the Qualitative and Quantitative Research**

The most notable common findings which emerged from the qualitative and quantitative research are discussed below:

###### **6.4.1.1 General Ministry Information**

- All ministries had adopted SP
- The main driving force for adopting SP was the need to proactively and strategically manage ministries
- The current enforcement mechanism, i.e. cabinet circular, used to mandate the implementation of SP requires strengthening.
- The environment ministries operate in is increasingly complex.

###### **6.4.1.2 Respondent Information**

- The majority of respondents had worked in the public sector for more than 5 years and had experience in public sector SP.

- The Zambian government has a policy of rotating staff between ministries.
- Respondents were representative of different departments, positions and gender.
- Representation of operational staff was low.

#### **6.4.1.3 Characteristics of the Strategic Planning Process**

- SPPs in ministries are increasingly comprehensive in terms of environmental analysis, sources of information, alternative identification and analysis and planning scope.
- Integration of SPPs with other organisational processes and inter-ministerial harmonisation of SP still presents a challenge for ministries.
- More attention was paid to the SP formulation stage compared to the other stages of the SPP.
- Poor implementation and monitoring and review still pose a challenge.
- SPPs in ministries are highly formal but less flexible.
- SPPs in ministries are increasingly participative, deliberative and consultative although much of the participation is at the formulation stage.
- Although there was an increase in participation of external stakeholders and operational staff, it was still lower than that of top and middle management.
- Use of strategy tools was limited
- The role of planning functions was considered vital and increasingly related to facilitation and coordination of SPPs.
- The extent and nature of adoption of SP varied between ministries.

#### **6.4.1.5 Barriers to Strategic Planning in the Zambian Public Sector**

- Inadequate financial resources was the greatest barrier to SP.
- Inadequate communication of SPs, inappropriate organisational culture, inappropriate management and leadership style, inadequate process alignment, political interference, vested interests, inadequate stakeholder participation, inadequate enforcement mechanisms and development of SPs taking too long emerged as some the other barriers.

#### **6.4.2 Contradictions between the Qualitative and Quantitative Findings.**

Very few differences between findings from the two methods were evident. Some of the notable ones included the following:

- Findings from the qualitative research indicated that ministry environments were increasingly unstable while findings from the quantitative research indicated that they were moderate to highly stable.
- Findings from the qualitative research suggested that stakeholder participation at the implementation stage was lower than at the formulation stage. Contrary to this, findings from the quantitative research suggested the opposite. This study, however, did not attempt to establish the reasons for this discrepancy.

Also notable was the existence of variations in responses from respondents coming from the same ministries on most of the questions which were asked. This raised questions as to the extent of understanding of the SPP that respondents had and the extent of their involvement in the process.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided very important findings on the nature and extent of adoption of SPPs in the Zambian public sector. Resulting from these findings, recommendations and conclusions have been drawn and are reported in the next chapter.



**7.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapter has provided very important findings on the nature and extent of adoption of SPPs in the Zambian public sector. Based on these findings, recommendations and conclusions have been drawn and are reported in this chapter.

**7.2 Contribution to Knowledge**

This study has made considerable contribution to knowledge some of which is discussed below:

**7.2.2 General Ministry Information**

Prior to this study, no documentation of the driving forces for the adoption of SP in the Zambian public sector and of the state of ministry environments existed. This study, therefore, made an original contribution to the literature to the extent that it established that the main driving force for adoption of SP was the need to proactively and strategically manage the public sector and that the use of a circular was not an effective driving force. With regard to the state of the environment, it was established that public sector environments are increasingly dynamic and complex. In addition to establishing the Zambian context, this finding also contributes to the literature by confirming findings by other researchers that public sector environments are becoming increasingly dynamic and complex (e.g. Bryson, 2011; Hendrick, 2003).

**7.2.3 Strategic Planning Process Characteristics**

Prior to this study, no critical investigation and documentation of the nature and extent of adoption of SP in the Zambian public sector was known to exist. This study, therefore, made a significant contribution by critically examining and documenting the nature and extent of adoption of SP in the Zambian public sector. Specifically, the following conclusions were drawn:

7.2.3.1 SPPs in the Zambian public sector were increasingly comprehensive in terms of environmental analysis, sources of information, alternative identification and analysis and planning scope. Public sector organisations increasingly monitored more areas of the environment, used more sources of information and were more exhaustive in identifying and analysing alternative strategies.

For example, Ministry E stated that: *“However, the list is endless depending on how we would have performed over a period of time. So, if there are certain challenges that we faced and were not related to what I mentioned, but affected our performance, we analyse those as well”*

This conclusion is in line with findings by Hendrick (2003) that public sector organisations are adopting more comprehensive SPPs and with the prediction by Bryson (2010) that this decade would see an increase in demand for the use of more comprehensive approaches.

- 7.2.3.2 Integration of SPPs with other organisational processes and inter-ministerial harmonisation of SP still presented a challenge. These challenges were evident in that most respondents indicated that their ministries faced challenges in aligning budgeting, annual planning and performance appraisal systems to their SPPs (See Table 6.14). In this regard, Ministry D stated that: *“That (alignment) has been the biggest challenge in probably the whole government system”*.

The other few studies which examined harmonisation of SPPs in public sector organisations also found this to be a challenge (e.g. Sulle, 2009; Green, 1998). At the time of this research, only scanty empirical literature was available on the extent of harmonisation of SP across public sector organisations (Section 2.4.3.1). This research, therefore, broadens the literature in this regard.

- 7.2.3.3 More attention was paid to the SP formulation stage compared to the other stages of the SPP (see Table 6.16). This was evidenced by the poor implementation of SPs as was stated by Ministry D that: *“...Generally, implementation of strategic plans in the government has been ineffective because the system itself is not effective....Therefore, you have the planning processes and the execution processes, but the M and E system is dysfunctional because of these discontinuities.”*

Vries (2014), Sulle (2009) and Green, (1998) in their studies, also found that more attention was paid to formulation compared to implementation and monitoring and review. The current study has added the *Zambian* context to the literature. This, therefore, appears to be a common problem for most organisations.

In this regard, the reality of SP in the Zambian public sector is at variance with requirements of the SMM (see Figure.2.1).and the literature as synthesised in Figure 3.1. Poor implementation and monitoring and review still posed a challenge (see Table 6.16).

7.2.3.4 SPPs are highly formal but less flexible. The formality of the process was evident in the existence of written SPs and in the role of the MDD in guiding the process in all government agencies based on a standard format. Limited flexibility was deduced from the absence of consensus among respondents on the extent to which scheduled SP reviews were undertaken (see Tables 6.17 and 6.19).

7.2.3.5 SPPs were increasingly participative, deliberative and consultative although much of the participation was at the formulation stage. More stakeholders were engaged in the process of developing SPs (see Tables 6.21 to 6.24).

7.2.3.6 Although there was an increase in the participation of external stakeholders and operational staff, it was still lower than that of top and middle management. For example, Ministry F stated: *“I think top management fully participates in the process. Middle management also tries, but the lower management does very little. ....I think we need to sensitise and encourage them to participate in the development of the strategic plan so that as they implement it, they can have an understanding of what it is.”*

7.2.3.7 Use of strategy tools was limited. This was evident in interview responses which revealed that the most used tools were the SWOT and PESTLE analysis and in the lack of consensus among questionnaire respondents regarding the tools used (see Table 6.25). At the time of this research, scanty empirical literature on the use of strategy tools in the public sector existed. This research, therefore, adds to the available literature.

7.2.3.8 The role of planning functions was considered vital and increasingly related to facilitation and coordination of SPPs (see Table 6.20)

7.2.3.9 The extent and nature of adoption of SP varied between ministries. This was evident in the existence of variations in responses between ministries. For example,

Appendix 23 shows that Ministry K paid more attention to SP formulation compared to Ministry I.

7.2.3.10. Financial resources were considered an external factor. This was due to the fact that ministries depended on external parties for their funding. In this regard, Ministry L stated: “.... *we look at the financing aspect because the ministry does not fund its own activities... because we have to wait for an external body to finance these activities.*”

7.2.3.11. The lack of adequate resources and the presence of political interference resulted in a loss of respect for SP as these factors frustrated implementation efforts.

#### **7.2.4 Barriers to Strategic Planning in the Zambian Public Sector**

Prior to this study no literature was known to exist on the barriers to SP in the Zambian public sector. This study, therefore, adds to the literature, particularly on the Zambian context, by providing a critical account of the barriers as summarised below:

7.2.4.1 Inadequate financial resources posed the biggest barrier to SP.

7.2.4.2 Inadequate communication of SPs, inappropriate organisational culture, inappropriate management and leadership style, inadequate process alignment, political interference, vested interests, inadequate stakeholder participation, inadequate enforcement mechanisms and development of SPs taking too long were some of the other barriers (See Table 6.26)

These findings confirm and add to the theory on barriers to SP by confirming the findings by Vries (2014) and Yambwa (2014) who found similar barriers in the Namibian public sector. Several other studies found similar findings in other settings e.g. (Recklies 2008; Beer and Eisenstat, 2000; Kargar and Blumenthal, 1994).

#### **7.2.5 Progression of Strategic Planning in the Zambian public Sector**

At the time of this study no critical investigation of the progression of SP in the Zambian public sector was known to exist. In this regard, this research contributed to the knowledge base by establishing the existence of mixed views among respondents as to whether their SPPs had improved (Section 6.2.6).

The conclusions in Sections 7.2.3 to 7.2.5 are much more than contributions to the literature but rather are also practical contributions to the practice of SP in the Zambian public sector. Knowledge of these findings should assist public managers in enhancing the quality of SP in the Zambian public sector. In this regard, a set of recommendations, arising from the findings of this study, was developed and is provided below.

#### **7.2.6 Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Zambian Public Sector**

Arising from the findings of this research, a number of guidelines were suggested to help public managers in Zambia in their implementation of SP. These include the following:

##### **7.2.6.1 Environmental Analysis**

Whereas findings show that ministry SPPs are increasingly comprehensive in environmental analysis, much more needs to be done by ministries in terms of analysing and developing forecast and assumptions for various external environmental factors, i.e. the economic, social, demographics, technology and stakeholders (Bryson, 2010).

The public sector exists to among other things create an environment that results in improved living conditions. The brief overview of the Zambian situation in Section 2.2.4 revealed that Zambia still faces a number of social challenges with a large proportion of citizens living in poverty. Carrying out comprehensive analysis of social factors should be useful in developing SPs that address the challenges faced by society.

Findings also revealed that resource inadequacy was the main barrier facing SP. Comprehensive analysis of the economic environment should be useful in developing a good understanding of the resources expected to be available to government and thus help in developing realistic SPs and in identifying alternative sources of resources.

Comprehensive monitoring of the technological environment should help the public sector in identifying means of providing services efficiently.

Planning functions should take a leading role in undertaking enhanced environmental monitoring and analysis (Poister, 2010). In this regard, the capacity of planning functions should be enhanced. The required information for the monitoring and analysis of environments can be found from a number of sources as discussed in Sections 6.2.4.1 and 6.3.4 and below.

#### **7.2.6.2 Sources of Information**

Coupled with environmental analysis is the issue of sources of information. The use of multiple sources of information helps in developing understanding of various aspects of the organisation and its environment. It should be helpful for the Zambian public sector to be more comprehensive in their sources of information. Some of the sources that should be explored to a higher extent include the internet, Central Statistics Office reports, sector publications and public hearings.

As discussed above, planning functions should exploit these sources. They should engage the Central Statistics Office to obtain the information they need. Much of this information is on the Central Statistics Office website, as such, public managers can use the internet to access it. They should also engage key sector players to establish what publications are available and to encourage them to make them available. In terms of public hearings, adequate and more targeted campaigns for hearings should be made through avenues like SMS notification, television and radio.

#### **7.2.6.3 Process Integration**

Integration of SPPs with other organisational processes is critical to the successful implementation of SP. The budgeting, human resource recruitment, staff performance appraisal, procurement planning and annual planning processes all provide mechanisms for implementing SP (Poister, Pitts and Hamilton, 2010). It is, therefore, necessary that these processes are aligned to the SPP (Bryson, 2010).

The alignment should not only be at the formulation stage but should include execution. Budget and annual plan execution should be as much aligned to the SP as their formulation. Reference should always be made to SPs both when developing operational plans and when executing them.

Ministers and Permanent Secretaries should be mandated through legislation to ensure that this alignment is achieved. The coordination of the mechanisms for the actual alignment should be assigned to planning functions. With regard to the budgeting process, the Ministry of Finance should always demand that government departments demonstrate that their budgets are aligned to SPs. In terms of the recruitment process, the Public Service Management Division should always demand that all recruitment requests are backed by SPs.

Notable to the Zambian public sector is the challenge of the lack of institutionalisation of performance management systems and the lack of alignment of staff performance appraisals to SPs. The Zambian Government, through the Cabinet Office, should institutionalise performance management and the alignment of staff performance appraisal systems to SPs. This should be applicable right from the top, including the political leadership, down to the least member of staff.

In this regard, the Cabinet Office should ensure performance contracts are developed between the Secretary to Cabinet and Permanent Secretaries and between the President and Ministers based on strategic objectives contained in SPs. Based on these contracts, annual performance appraisals should be undertaken. Annual performance appraisals based on SPs should also be undertaken for all other civil servants. Permanent Secretaries should be held accountable for ensuring that performance appraisals are done in their ministries.

#### **7.2.6.4 Process Completeness**

SP is a continuous and iterative process which involves formulation, implementation and monitoring and review. It is essential that all stages of the SPP are implemented for SP to be effective.

Findings suggest that in the Zambian public sector more attention was paid to the formulation stage compared to the other two stages. This, perhaps, is reasons for the reported poor implementation of SP. To address the challenge of poor implementation, the Zambian public sector has to adopt SP in its fullness by applying more attention to the implementation and monitoring and review stages.

Responsibility for ensuring the completeness of SPPs should rest with Permanent Secretaries and should be enforced by the Secretary to the Cabinet who should ensure that sanctions are applied on those not complying.

#### **7.2.6.5 Inter-ministerial Strategic Planning Process Harmonisation**

The public sector in Zambia is one big body which is divided into ministries, agencies and departments. All ministries, therefore, are supposed to contribute to the achievement of the overall mandate of the public sector. It is, therefore, necessary that the government endeavours to put in place mechanisms for harmonising ministry SP (Green, 1998).

These mechanisms should include the introduction of a legal framework to compel the requirement to harmonise SPs. In addition to consultations during the formulation process, ministries should be compelled to circulate their SPs to other ministries prior to launch and those to whom circulations are made should be compelled to respond within clearly specified time frames. Further, in line with guideline 7.2.6.8 below, the MDD should focus more on monitoring such issues as opposed to the formulation of SPs.

#### **7.2.6.6 Flexibility**

Flexibility of SP is important in ensuring the responsiveness of SPs to changing environmental conditions. Considering that the Zambian public sector operates in an increasingly dynamic environment, it is necessary that though formal, SPPs become more flexible (Ugboro, Obeng and Spann, 2010). This should be achieved through institutionalising scheduled and more frequent SP reviews to assess implementation progress and suitability of SPs in light of environmental changes.

In line with the foregoing, public sector organisations should be compelled to conduct at least mid-term reviews of their SPs. This should be enforced through the MDD.

#### **7.2.6.7 Stakeholder participation at all stages of the SPP**

SP is a deliberative process (Bryson, 2011). It requires participation of both internal and external stakeholders at all its stages. Doing so provides a means for being exhaustive in scope and for achieving ownership among stakeholders which in turn enhances implementation (Poister, Pitts and Hamilton, 2010)

Despite findings indicating increased participation of stakeholders in SP, lower participation was still apparent at the implementation and monitoring and review stages more so for operational staff and external stakeholders. Planning functions of the public sector in Zambia should, therefore, endeavour to enhance participation of operational staff and external stakeholders in their SPP at all stages of the process (Bryson, 2010). Further, overall responsibility for SP should be assigned to senior management who have the authority to make decisions. This entails more participation of top management in SP at all stages.

#### **7.2.6.8 Role of the Management Development Division**

MDD plays an important role in coordinating and guiding SP in all government agencies in Zambia. However, there is need for them to extend their effort to all stages of the SPP.



There is need for a major shift in their role from that of more involvement in the preparation of SPs to more of monitoring the implementation of SP to its fullness. This entails that the MDD should focus on developing internal capacity in public agencies for them to prepare their own SPs. This measure should result in more time being created for them to concentrate on overall coordination and monitoring. Further, it is necessary for the MDD to improve their capacity to enable them to be more accessible to government agencies.

The cost implications of this measure relate to the cost of training in ministries and recruitment of more staff for the MDD. Although the initial costs may be significant, in the long run this measure will be cheaper and sustainable.

#### **7.2.6.9 Ministry Strategic Planning Internal Capacity**

After 22 years of using SP in the Zambian public sector, there is still high dependency on the MDD in the development of SPs. Public agencies still lack internal capacity to develop SPs. It is desirable that effort be directed towards building internal capacity. Considering that SP is a cross-cutting issue, internal capacity should not be restricted to planning functions but rather to everyone. This measure should result in more appreciation of SP across government agencies and, therefore, more participation, higher ownership and greater chances of successful implementation.

#### **7.2.6.10 Use of Strategy Tools**

Strategy tools serve to aid and guide managers in making strategic decisions by providing systematic structures for generating and analysing information and alternatives, for selecting choices and for measuring performance. Considering the foregoing and findings from this study regarding the limited application of strategy tools, it is necessary that the Zambian public sector endeavours to enhance their use of tools which are capable of addressing their needs in the present day world. These tools should be adapted to Zambia's unique circumstances taking account of factors like the inadequacy of resources and effective information management systems (Jarratt and Stiles, 2010; Williams and Lewis, 2008).

The identification and adaptation of strategy tools should be undertaken by the MDD in consultation with other government departments. This is in view of the fact that it is MDD's mandate to innovate public sector reforms in Zambia. Engaging ministries will

assist in ensuring that the tools that are adapted take account of reality and that public managers take ownership of them therefore enhancing their use.

#### **7.2.6.11 External Monitoring of Strategic Planning**

This study has established the existence of a weak SP monitoring framework in the Zambian public sector. In this regard, there is need to enhance external monitoring of SP. This can be achieved by enhancing and strengthening the capacity of the Auditor-General's office and Parliament in providing oversight through monitoring SP implementation.

The Auditor-General's Office should monitor the compliance of public organisations to SP requirements and report their findings to Parliament who should hold these organisations accountable for their compliance or non-compliance. At the ministerial level, rewards and punishments for non-compliance should be spelt out by the President, at the Permanent Secretary level by the Secretary to the Cabinet and below that by Permanent Secretaries.

#### **7.2.6.12 Resources Inadequacy**

Resource inadequacy emerged to be the main barrier to SP in the Zambian public sector. In this regard, the government should endeavour to increase its revenue base through measures like diversifying the economy beyond copper. Economic diversification will broaden the revenue base resulting in increased revenue for the treasury to fund implementation of SPs.

On the part of public agencies, they should endeavour to mobilise resources from other sources other than the national treasury. More important, however, they should ensure that they develop realistic and feasible SPs. As discussed in Section 7.2.6.1 above, SPs should be based on a realistic view of the prevailing and expected environmental conditions.

#### **7.2.6.13 Staffing Matters.**

The findings suggest that staff transfers between government agencies presented a barrier to SP. Much as transfers of staff between ministries are a good thing, they should take account of the need for continuity. Personnel who were key in developing a SP should as much as possible be retained until such a time that others are comfortable with implementing it.

In terms of work culture, which has continued to be challenge, government should continue to devise and implement reforms aimed at improving public servant attitude towards work. The institutionalisation of a culture of performance appraisal systems, as proposed in guideline 7.2.6.3 above, will be a useful means of inculcating a desired culture. Other measures should include continuing the recruitment of appropriately qualified personnel and improving conditions of service.

#### **7.2.6.14 Top Leadership and Management Commitment**

Top leadership commitment is essential in ensuring the successful implementation of any programme (Ugboro, Obeng and Spann, 2010). The top political leadership, i.e. the President, Ministers and Deputy Ministers should show Commitment to SP if it is to be successfully implemented. To achieve this, it is necessary that these leaders are oriented on the SPP, what it is, why it is important and how it is done. The orientation should also cover the role of the MDD. Further, as stated earlier, the performance of these leaders should be tied to the achievement of strategic objectives contained in SPs. Furthermore, in addition to the President holding Ministers accountable for implementation of SP, Parliament should, through the parliamentary oversight system, hold them accountable.

The top administrative leadership should also show commitment to SP. They, too, should be oriented on SP and should have their performance tied to the achievement of strategic objectives in SP.

#### **7.2.6.15 Enforcement of Strategic Planning**

Legislation provides an effective means of enforcement. In this regard, legislation should be introduced to mandate and regulate the implementation of SP in the Zambian public sector. The guidelines provided here should be incorporated in legislation if they are to be successfully implemented. Further, release of funding by the Ministry of Finance should be tied to implementation of SP.

### **7.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

Several opportunities for further research have been established, some of which are discussed below:

- 7.3.1 Assessment of the effect of SP on the performance of the Zambian public sector.  
Having established the nature and extent of adoption of SP in the Zambian public

sector in this study, research on what effect it has had on performance would provide a useful contribution to the literature and, indeed, to its practice.

7.3.2 Assessment of the reasons for the limited utilisation of strategy tools and of the potential benefits of adopting newer tools for use in the Zambian public sector. This research will help public sector managers to find means of improving their utilisation of strategy tools thereby improving the practice of SP. Further, it will contribute to the literature on the usage of strategy tools as no such research has since been undertaken on the Zambian context. Developers of strategy tools should also be able to benefit from the results of such research.

7.3.3 Assessment of the extent of participation of external stakeholders in SPP in the Zambian public sector from external's stakeholders' point of view. Considering the importance of external stakeholders in the public sector, establishing understanding of how they perceive the extent of their participation and how they think it can be enhanced would be a very important contribution both to the literature and practice of SP.

7.3.4 Assessment of the extent to which available financial resources are applied towards implementation of SP to ascertain whether inadequacy of financial resources is as much a barrier as has been portrayed in this research. This research need arises from the fact that inadequate financial resources was a highly pronounced barrier by all respondents. Is it that resources are really so inadequate or is it an issue of poor prioritisation? If even the little resources that are available are not directed at implementation of SP then, probably, even if more resources were available implementation of SP would still remain poor. Therefore, this research should add both to the literature and practice of SP.

#### **7.4 Limitations of the Research.**

Although this study was carefully and diligently designed, a few limitations were apparent. The most notable limitation was the existence of a challenge with accessing respondents. As has been discussed in Section 5.1, public servants in Zambia are very busy. This resulted in the alteration of the study design from one based on a phased approach where the second phase should have benefited from findings of the first to carrying out both phases simultaneously.

Secondly, the study did not give external stakeholders an opportunity to express their views on the extent to which they are engaged in SP which presents a potential for respondent bias. However, engaging external stakeholders was outside the scope of this study. As discussed in Section 7.3, this presents an opportunity for future research.

Thirdly, there was limited participation of top management in this study, reasons for which have been discussed in Section 4.1. As much as it would have been desirable to have more top management participation, the respondents who participated had adequate knowledge of SPPs of ministries in Zambia.

Fourthly, as discussed in Section 4.4, the research was only applied on government ministries. This raises questions regarding the extent to which the research findings can be generalized to other public organisations other than ministries. Other public organisations were outside the scope of this study. This is another avenue for future research, to establish the extent to which other public organisations in Zambia have adopted SP.

A further limitation relates to the researcher's inability to assess the extent to which the responses given were indeed reflective of the reality of SP in the Zambian public sector. This limitation was mitigated by the inclusion of multiple respondents from each ministry and the use of mixed methods which provided an opportunity for validation and triangulation.

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